

#TRIED&TASTED

Sinful Hot Chocolate

A steaming cup of hot chocolate is just the thing you need on a chilly autumn afternoon or cold winter night.

There are so many words to describe hot chocolate: decadent, creamy, velvety, and rich all apply to a piping-hot mug of cocoa. With one look at our list of the best hot chocolate recipes out there, you'll realize what you've been missing out on. After all, winter only lasts for a few months, so you'll definitely

want to make your winter drink indulgences count. A steaming cup of hot chocolate is just the thing you need on a chilly autumn afternoon or cold winter night. There's no need to grab that store-bought instant cocoa mix next time you get the craving, especially when you have a rich and comforting hot chocolate recipe at your disposal.

Old-Fashioned Hot Chocolate

- Ingredients**
- 2 ounces unsweetened chocolate
 - 1/3 cup white granulated sugar
 - 4 cups whole milk
 - 1 pinch salt
 - 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Marshmallow** creme or fluff, or whipped cream, for garnish.



Preparation

- Gather the ingredients.
- In a 2-quart saucepan, place the chocolate, sugar, milk, and salt. Over medium-low heat, stir gently with whisk until the chocolate melts and the mixture is well blended.

- Remove from the heat and stir in the vanilla extract.
- Put the hot chocolate into mugs and top with a spoonful of marshmallow creme or whipped cream, if desired.

Viennese Hot Chocolate



- Ingredients**
- 6 ounces semisweet chocolate (60 to 70 percent cocoa)
 - 1 1/4 cups milk
 - 1 large egg yolk
- Whipped cream**, for garnish

Preparation

- Chop the chocolate into small bits. Place it in a heavy saucepan with the milk.
- Heat the milk and chocolate, stirring frequently until small bubbles come to the surface, but do not boil. Stir as needed to keep the milk from burning and the chocolate from sinking to the bottom.

Classic Dutch Hot Chocolate

- Ingredient**
- 1/3 cup (100 grams) dark chocolate chips
 - 1 teaspoon Dutch process cocoa powder
 - 1 1/4 cups (300 millilitres) whole milk
 - 1 tablespoon whipped cream, best quality
 - 1 shot brandy, or rum, to taste
- Granulated** sugar, or sweetener to taste, optional
- Cocoa powder, for dusting
- Ground cinnamon, for dusting



The hopeful little wildflower blossomed in the monsoon for the moth and the bee....

With no burden of beauty - yet Beautiful.....alas for nobody to see....

Sowing its own seeds in its own earth underneath

It withers away in hope....maybe you will see it in the next spree.....

While countries across the world have celebrated, studied, and revered their shrublands and grasslands, in India we have a serious disconnect with these habitats. It is evident from the fact that they are often marked as 'fallowland' and 'wastelands' even in government and forest books. Even in general lingo, such pieces of land are often called "banjar" (impotent) filled with "jhaad jhankaar" (weeds). "Iski to landscaping karni padegi, thodi hariyali honi chahiye". This kind of attitude could well be the most serious threat to their conservation. How can we save or conserve something that in popular belief is ugly, worthless, or dead to begin with? However, when one starts to observe and befriend these habitats, one realizes the infinite beauty that the grasses and the tiny wildflowers behold. Beautiful for nobody to see. **Interview with Pradip Krishen**



Gaurav Bhatnagar

—birds, insects, rodents, mammals, reptiles.

"Landscape on Ventilator"

This 18th century painting of "Jaipur and its environs" from the archives of the Jaipur Court reminds us of Jaipur's naturally arid ecology. My grandfather made our family home in Bapu Nagar in 1960 and clearly remembers there were sand dunes all around for miles and hyenas and jackals were quite commonly seen in the vicinity. Young Jaipurites, however, will probably not connect Jaipur with any kind of Desert. The city's landscape aspirations now are totally different. Today's Jaipur is lined with green exotic tree avenues and parks with manicured lawns - all made possible by exploiting precious underground water reserves which have already plummeted to more than 600ft below ground. Although there has been a major shift with people now recycling or harvesting water and using native species of trees, most of them are unsustainable to maintain and wither away in just a few days of no watering - Ours is now a "Landscape on ventilator". Even if sustained, it is nowhere near the natural ecology of the area.

The people of the Thar understood, connected, and conserved the ecology of the desert and used it brilliantly for centuries for their survival in a place that often gets less than 4 inches of rain in a year. The breeding record of the Punjab Raven gives us great insight and perspective into what Jaipur might have been like in 1873. Indeed, Jaipur and much of western Rajasthan was and remains arid and sandy. Arid, but by no means dead or lifeless. The sandy soil was layered on top with an extremely rich and vibrant layer of hardy, xerophytic flora. Trees like the Bamboo, Kumthta, Khejri, Rohida, Bonjh - to name just a few - dotted the landscape but far more dominant were shrubs and grasses like the Sarkanda, Kair, Phog, Bui and Kheemp - all perfectly attuned to the soil and the harsh climate. Within this rich flora flourished an immensely rich faunal biodiversity



KISHAN BAGH Recreating the Roe

#WILDERNESS

"Charagahs and charnotes" - traditional grazing lands, full of nutritious grasses and shrubs - were protected by the people. They drew their food, building material, clothing - all from the desert and harvested every drop of water - a lesson in sustainability and frugal living. "The connect....."

My first introduction to these rich habitats as a young nature observer was when I visited the tiny Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary in Churu district in 2001, once a hunting ground for the erstwhile Bikaner state. When we arrived at the place, at first glance, it seemed like a large open grassland with virtually no trees, except some acacia tree clumps here and there. My first reaction was to wonder if there would be any wildlife in such a degraded landscape with such a small number of trees and water bodies? I was pleasantly surprised when we went exploring and I realized how rich the area was in terms of its biodiversity. It was unbelievable how many bird species were seen in that little area of just 9 sqkm.

Almost every tree was dotted with a bird of prey, clouds of thousands of Larks bursting out of the grasses when the harriers flew past, the Blackbucks roaming and prong-

ing in large groups grazing the grasslands and the unforfeitable sounds of "kurrrr...kurrrr...kurrrr" of the Kurja or Demoiselle Cranes slowly coming down to land on the grasses and feeding on their seeds. Till date more than 350 bird species have been spotted in Tal Chhapar apart from countless insects, rodents, reptiles, and mammals. Since then, I have visited this magical place countless times to observe its avifauna and have realized just how important it is to save and conserve these extremely fragile and fast diminishing ecosystems. The hopeful little wildflower blossomed in the monsoon for the moth and the bee....

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While countries across the world have celebrated, studied, and revered their shrublands and grasslands, in India we have a serious disconnect with these habitats. It is evident from the fact that they are often marked as 'fallowland' and 'wastelands' even in government and forest books. Even in general lingo, such pieces of land are often called "banjar" (impotent) filled with "jhaad jhankaar" (weeds). "Iski to landscaping karni padegi, thodi hariyali honi chahiye". This kind of attitude could well be the most serious threat to their conservation. How can we save or conserve something that in popular belief is ugly, worthless, or dead to begin with? However, when one starts to observe and befriend these habitats, one realizes the infinite beauty that the grasses and the tiny wildflowers behold. Beautiful for nobody to see. One concerted and conscious effort to conserve and educate people about the desert and its ecology has been the exemplary Rao Jodha Park in Jodhpur. Supported by the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, it has been conceived, designed, and executed by the noted environmentalist, author, filmmaker,rewilder - Pradip Krishen. I knew Pradip through his books, 'The Trees of Delhi' (2006) and 'Jungle trees of Central India' (2015) - both path breaking and phenomenal books, not only in terms of their content and research but also the way they have been designed. So naturally, I was excited when my good friend, Tarun, told me we would be meeting Pradip in Vidhyadhar Nagar where he is making an ecological park with the Rajasthan Government. We met Pradip on-site atop an old dune in Vidhyadhar Nagar abutting the Swarna Jayanti Park. Pradip was centered amidst great noise and chaos as he was guiding a crane carrying a humungous block of granite to be placed precisely where he wanted it to go. He felt is impor-

Bangkok's Full Name is 163 Letters

The city with the longest name is Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Yuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burrom Udonratchawanwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkatthayai Witsanukam Prasit. Rather than going by the 21-word name, the city goes by its widely known nickname: Bangkok. This true name is the longest name of any place on earth. (And indeed, it's hard to fathom something longer...)

tant to try and draw attention to these small pockets of remaining Roe, and we thought - wouldn't it be great to introduce the word 'Roe' into the vocabulary that people use when they talk or think about the desert? And then, hopefully, if the word catches on and becomes popular, people will go out into the desert to look for it. And in this way, who knows, maybe the Roe becomes known and loved, and eventually, conserved too?

How important is the Roe in an ecological sense? How do these habitats compare with other better-known habitats like forests and wetlands?

The desert has had a very bad deal, because even professional foresters - who really ought to know better - treat the desert like one big wasteland. As if deserts are a 'mistake' that needs to be transformed into something else. But the desert is very far from being a wasteland - it's actually very rich in its natural flora, in its birds and reptiles that show remarkable adaptations to harsh conditions. The point is that it is a natural ecology that has achieved a fine balance, and any attempts by government or the forest department to divert Himalayan river water into it or plant trees in it that don't belong there are misplaced and will surely end in disaster. We have seen this again and again. Deserts are the way they are because of global weather patterns that control moisture and movements of air and precipitation and so on, and the plants that grow there naturally have evolved to be wonderfully adapted to those conditions. I don't think we ought to try and change deserts into something else.

Why a Roe in Jaipur? Was there a specific reason for you to choose this particular habitat? I believe the Govt. of Rajasthan approached you, they were looking for something quite different? When I first saw Kishan Bagh it was basically a set of dunes made of sand that had piled up at the base of these hills and now had nowhere to go because the hills stood in their way. When I first saw these dunes, I thought we could treat them like the dunes you find much further out west, with plants that develop long roots and live 'happily' in sand dunes. This seemed the only sustainable way to work with these dunes. And then the idea of the Roe struck! And I decided to use this landscape to introduce the idea of the Roe, what it is, how beautiful it is, and how perfectly suited it is to its natural landscape. This was the seminal idea - a Park about Rajasthan's natural Roe.

It's true that for the JDA and the government this was a radically different kind of proposal than what they were thinking of, but I give them a lot of credit for being open and accepting the idea on its merits.

Pradip, let me first start by congratulating you on Kishan Bagh. It is a fantastic culmination of your research, vision and hard work. It's surely a feather in the cap for Jaipur.

Thank you for your kind words. I'm very interested to see how Jaipur receives Kishan Bagh. It's not at all like a usual municipal park. I hope Jaipur opens its heart and welcomes this quirky addition to the city's recreational areas!

Is Kishan Bagh a 'Roe habitat'? Could you please tell us what these habitats are and the story behind the word 'Roe'? Kishan Bagh is not per se a 'Roe'. We've used some aspects of Kishan Bagh to tell the story of a 'Roe' which is a Marwari jungle of the desert, which is not a forest but a shrubland. There are hardly any trees out there, maybe a khejdi or two here and there, but the dominant plants in harsh, arid places are shrubs and grasses that have found the means to survive in really difficult conditions. Roes are very endangered now. We felt it's impor-



Talk us through Kishan Bagh and its various facets and features.

We've conceived Kishan Bagh as a long walk through a rewilded habitat with lots of little 'islands' of interest - the islands are all different kinds of landscapes in the desert. It's about trying to tell our visitors something interesting about each of these landscapes, little things that might snag their interest or arouse their curiosity to a point where they might want to find out more, explore further, when they get home. I'm hoping that older children, in particular, will find lots of things in Kishan Bagh to interest them. And the walks, especially through the dunes, will only get better and better as time goes on and more plant goes up. And more birds spot the rewilded dunes in northern Jaipur and decide to visit too!

The geological installations in KB - why did you choose to include them?

One of the 'interpretation islands' is called 'All About Sand'. Kishan Bagh is made up nearly entirely of sand, so I thought it would be interesting to tell the story of all of Rajasthan's rocks that are made up mostly of sand - or silica. The more we probed, the more interesting things we found. One of the most striking exhibits here is an installation of sandstone we call 'Madhattan' because it looks a bit like a set of tall skyscrapers (in a slightly mad kind of way) What it is actually a collection of different kinds of sandstone that formed in Rajasthan, with the oldest and newest spanning more than a billion years! And the colours and patterns and swirls of this wonderful stone look beautiful when you bunch them together like we've done. There's so many stories in there!

And all we can do as storytellers is to spark an interest, in the hope that someone will find it rewarding

Apartment from the plant displays, there is a section where all the different types of rocks of Rajasthan have been showcased and their relationship with the flora explained in succinct words. I would urge Jaipurites from all walks of life to visit the park and appreciate the effort made by Pradip and his Team. There is something to take away for everyone.



What can landscape designers and horticulturists take away from Kishan Bagh and its unique application. Mainly the idea that it's not hard to plant ecologically, gardening with nature instead of uphill, against it. It's a very simple idea, really - if you use native plants that are wonderfully adapted to doing well in a particular ecology, life becomes very easy! What we do, the things we build, always tend to look different and unique because we're always experimenting, never wanting to repeat ourselves. I hope our structures will also be inspiring - Golak has a very special eye, an unusual aesthetic!

As shrublands and grasslands are under great threat in India, can there be a roadmap to conserve and revive them? In other words, can Kishan Bagh be a model that can be replicated and upscaled to save degraded habitats?

Well, there ought to be a roadmap. But there's 2 big obstacles to conserving shrublands and grasslands in India. One is Foresters, who are not trained to value or respect them. Grasslands are called 'forest blanks' in their parlance, as if they are nothing, an absence. The other problem is the way our present government at the Centre has no respect for nature or wilderness, but wants to take over any land it possibly can for industry or so called 'development projects'. Until we have nothing, an absence. The other problem is the way our present government at the Centre has no respect for nature or wilderness, but wants to take over any land it possibly can for industry or so called 'development projects'. Until we have nothing, an absence. The other problem is the way our present government at the Centre has no respect for nature or wilderness, but wants to take over any land it possibly can for industry or so called 'development projects'. Until we have nothing, an absence. The other problem is the way our present government at the Centre has no respect for nature or wilderness, but wants to take over any land it possibly can for industry or so called 'development projects'. Until we have nothing, an absence.

to follow it up and explore further. Is the Roe in KB self-sustaining? What is the maintenance compared to stereotyped landscaped gardens. Oh, entirely self-sustaining. One of the fundamental principles of restoring natural ecosystems is to achieve sustainability. When we plant things, we look after them for no more than about 4 or 5 months after the rains, and then they have to look after themselves. No more watering, no after-care. If they don't survive, it's a sign that we've done something wrong, planted the wrong plant in the wrong place.



How many people were involved in the making of KB? What was your core team? There were 4 of us - Golak Khandual was the architect in our Team. He's a brilliant artist and is responsible for designing all the intriguing and unusual structures you see inside the Park which are meant to evoke the desert and how people build in the Thar.

Then there is Vijay Dhasmana, who, like me, works in planting up wild, natural landscapes. And there's Harpreet Kaur who runs a landscape architecture office in Delhi and was instrumental in translating ideas into sketches and figures into books. But I have to include Ali, who joined us 4 years ago as our Supervisor and the way he has grown and learnt all about our unusual ways of working with plants has been amazing, and he is now definitely a core member of our Team.

Can conservation projects, like KB, survive in a more porous environment with human and animal interactions. People like us, who call ourselves 'ecological restoration' practitioners, only get to work on relatively small projects - 100, 200 acres at best. All the vast lands that really cry out to be restored are with the Forest Department, and they don't know how to do any restoration and don't wish to invite anyone in to do it for them either. The result is that we're fiddling around with 200 acres when we should ideally be rewilding 20,000 or even 200,000 hectares of degraded forest land. When you do restoration work on that kind of scale, it has to be a landscape that has synergy with the people who live in it, with their needs and aspirations, as well as the animals that live in it. A large rewilded landscape with deer and gaur and other kinds of browsers will just have to find a way of becoming sustainable, instead of fencing itself off. But while we're only dealing with small pockets like Kishan Bagh, we're forced to make fences and protect what's inside. It's a pity, really.

What next after Kishan Bagh? What are your future endeavours? I'm restoring part of the natural ecology of Scindia School, up on a hill in Gwalior, for starters. Hoping to get the kids involved too. At least some of them. And I'm still very connected with Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park in Jodhpur, even though I've handed over the reins to someone else. I'll continue to be involved with Kishan Bagh too, even after new management steps in very soon now. It's one of my babies! How can I just walk away! (smile)

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THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman