

Gobi Manchurian

Aparna's favourite dish was Gobi Manchurian. She could eat platefuls of it! Every time they went out to eat, Aparna's family knew that she would definitely order this dish.



So, you can imagine Aparna's excitement one day, when Uncle Ram offered to show her how Gobi Manchurian is made, by taking her into the kitchen of his hotel.

"Ooooh! I will actually see them make it?" squealed Aparna, with joy.

"You sure will!" beamed Uncle Ram, kindly. "I will take you on Sunday morning, ok?"

Aparna was up early that Sunday. Now that was very unusual for Aparna – you see, she loved to lie in bed on Sunday mornings, and get out of it as late as nine or ten o'clock in the morning. But today she was up and ready by 8 o'clock!

Uncle Ram was not home yet to take her. "Why isn't he here yet, Amma?" asked Aparna.

Amma laughed. "Just because you are up and about doesn't mean the chefs in the restaurant will also be ready now, Aparna! It is Sunday, and they won't get to work until ten or eleven in the morning, I am sure! Read a book until Uncle Ram comes to take you, and don't bother me now!"

Pouting, Aparna settled down to finish the Harry Potter book that she was rereading for the eleventh time now.

Uncle Ram came by 10 am only, just as Amma had said. Putting her book aside, Aparna ran up to him and held his outstretched hand. "Let's go, Uncle!" she sang, excitedly.

Uncle Ram was very amused by her eagerness. "I hope you will enjoy standing in the hot kitchen as much as you are now looking forward to being there!" he guffawed.

Aparna didn't mind anything. She was simply logging to see her favourite dish being prepared.

Off they went on Uncle Ram's two-wheeler, with Aparna seated behind him and tightly clutching her helmet.

There wasn't much traffic on Sunday morning, so they reached the restaurant in fifteen minutes. Uncle Ram was greeted respectfully by the security guard at the entrance. Nodding briskly, he led Aparna into the restaurant and then through doors marked "For Hotel Staff Only" right into a hot and steaming kitchen.

A moustached man with a tall white cap greeted both of them with a huge smile.

"Good morning, Sir! Good morning, Madam! I am Bansidhar. Come, I will show you how we make Gobi Manchurian!" Holding her hand, he nodded as Uncle Ram quickly signaled that he was leaving her in the kitchen, so as to go and attend to his work.

Aparna was led to a huge steel vessel that had plenty of fresh white cauliflowers stacked inside it.

“See, here we have the fresh vegetable. The first thing we need to do is to clean it thoroughly.”

Aparna was puzzled. “But they look so fresh and white, Uncle! What do you have to do to clean them now?” she asked.

Without saying a word, Bansidhar pointed to the topmost cauliflower. Seated snugly in the folds of the flower was a fat, green juicy worm.

Aparna recoiled. “Ugh!” She exclaimed. “Where did that come from, Uncle?”

“We must ask the worm that, now, shouldn’t we?” Bansidhar laughed. “Well, we are more worried about how to get rid of it, than to ask it where it came from! We can’t feed our customers worms, now, can we?”

Aparna was very disturbed. Her favorite dish started off with worms? How could that be?

She was full of questions. “How does a worm get into the cauliflower? When does it come there? How long can it stay there? What if we miss seeing it there...ugh!” Aparna was revolted.

Bansidhar patted her head and said gently: “Now, now, that’s a lot of questions for one morning, right? Worms are also living things, like you and me. They can get into mangoes, capsicums, cauliflowers, ladies’ finger, brinjal ...anything... it is a huge challenge to grow fruits and vegetables that don’t carry worms.”

Aparna could never forget those words. She resolved - then and there - to try and find a way to meet that challenge someday.

Can you help her find a way to meet that challenge?



Write/draw your thoughts and ideas and send them in to thinkingteacher22@gmail.com