

## METRO PLUS

## Telling stories through food



NEETI SARKAR

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**Anisha Oommen and Aysha Tanya believe cookbooks document a vital part of the human experience**

The weekend is here and while for some that implies catching up with friends at a local watering hole, a group of young women are excited about a pyjama party with a potluck inspired by Enid Blyton.

The do is organised by Anisha Oommen and Aysha Tanya, who spearhead Goya Media ([www.goyamedia.in](http://www.goyamedia.in)). “The Enid Blyton Midnight Feast was Anisha’s idea, and is inspired by the many Malory Towers and St. Claire’s books she read as a child,” says Aysha.

This is the second meet of the cookbook club, the first was held at Cubbon Park in October. Anisha says, “The Goya Cookbook Club is a celebration of our two favourite things – books and food. Aysha moved to Bangalore quite recently, and it was her idea to start it – she wanted to do a potluck with the girls, and thought it would be fun if we each cooked a dish out of one

particular cookbook. It was also rooted in the need to reaffirm the importance of cookbooks in the digital age. While yes, you could probably find every recipe ever written online, cookbooks play a much deeper role – they are a narrative of culture told through food. In the

preservation of a community’s culinary culture, cookbooks document a vital part of the human experience – how we eat. Things quickly evolved from here; we decided to make it an open, more inclusive club, to bring people together over a shared love of eating and cooking. So we sent out a few emails, posted about it online, and opened it up to anyone who might be interested.”

This cookbook club and *The Goya Journal* are initiatives that come under their parent company, Goya Media.

“Aysha and I have been food writers for some time now and wanted to be part of a publication that looked at food through a more nuanced lens; to see food as a way of navigating culture, identity, politics, sociology and all those other disciplines that document who we are at this point in time. Food is a fantastic way to understand geography, trade, economy, history and tradition,” Anisha says.

“The journal is a food publication that works with writers, photographers, illustrators and other creatives in different spheres to tell these stories. It is a platform to collaborate, document, investigate and explore all these facets for the India of our times,” she adds.

An area that hasn’t been explored much yet, culinary storytelling is a subject that is close to their hearts. “Right now, the dominant narrative around food hinges on restaurant reviews, or personal blogs on home-cooking. While both of these are important elements of culinary storytelling, there is a huge gap in the narrative, and we wanted *The Goya Journal* to be more than a place that people come to find where they can get their next burger. What we eat is a snapshot of where we are in time, a journey of where we have come from, and a map to where we are going. We want the Journal to be all of that, and more,” Aysha explains.

The Goya girls met only earlier this year. “We spent the first three months talking non-stop, exchanging notes, sharing stories, links, and books,” Anisha says. “We were both working at a magazine at the time, and things escalated quickly from there. By May, Goya was a very real idea, and we were online within three days of discussing our first idea - we published our first piece on Mothers’ Day. Aysha was in Kannur, and I was in Bangalore, and we were on the phone, on text, on WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger, all at once. It was exciting, exhilarating, and entirely fun.”

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