

A village's TRYST with ADVENTURE

Shaurya Kshatri presents his account of the country's maiden world cup and its unconventional hosts

It's not often that a humble solitary tea-shop gets to become a part of sporting lore. But on a bright clear day of November 1 that's exactly what had happened when athletes, and journalists had all gathered around for a little break on their way to the first ever Paragliding Accuracy World Cup in the country.

At the packed tea-house of Waling Municipality, we were all awaiting the arrival of the Chief Guest, Jagat Biswokarma, Minister for Youths and Sports before making our way to the 'take-off' site at Sworek in the Bhirkot Municipality. There were processions of pick-ups and SUVs parked outside for any other vehicles were deemed unsuitable for the steep, narrow and dusty paths up to Sworek. While we waited there, I couldn't help but notice the silence around.

For a place that was commissioned to host a World-Cup, Waling felt extremely silent. The schools were out, the offices closed and the public transports were running almost empty. But as it turned out, it had only been a few brief moments of calm before the storm. Distant noises began approaching as the sound of roaring engines got louder accompanied by *panche bajras* and the huge uproar of people. Processions of pick-up and SUVs came in following the minister. And just like that something of a pandemonium had broken loose in what had otherwise been an uneventful affair. People swarmed in droves towards the parked pick-ups. Fortunately, I had gotten a seat and didn't have to



climb out at the back in the open. All along the track, adults and even children climbed aboard the moving vehicle. "It gets riskier to drive in a road as steep as this when you have kids jumping to and fro from the vehicles. A lot of them get injured, sometimes quite severely," informed a local. A sandy village up the undulating terraces from the Aandhikhola River, Sworek is a tranquil place where people wake with roosters, work in paddy fields and are



with *nanglos* full of garlands and *tikas* to welcome the guests.

Out at the top, the village had erupted in a sea of colour and noise as locals had ascended in their thousands for the first ever paragliding world cup in Nepal. The pilots had walked up to the grounds being greeted with loud applause and cheers from the crowd who were positioned all over the cliff. While ministers and distinguished officials sat on the raised pedestal in the stage, the foreign players simply smiled and sat on patches of grass among the locals in the blaring scorching sun of mid-afternoon. There were cultural shows to entertain the crowd every now and then to break the monotony that ensued after elongated political speeches. In one particular circumstance, a group of musicians had gotten so tired of waiting for their turn that they started playing their tunes only to be stopped after a

personnel soon started to shift their lenses from the stage to that outside of it to focus on life that had begun to unfold in Sworek.

In this off-the-grid corner of the Bhirkot Municipality, locals were engrossed in a tournament they didn't quite understand but took just as seriously. "It's a fairly simple sport. You take off with a glider from a vantage point and land on a piece of flat land," interpreted one pilot from Slovenia, Preloznil Rok, a tall jolly fellow with graying hair and an easily discernible appetite for flight.

Syangja is today referred to as the second best alternative after Pokhara for Paragliding. "For the sport to develop in Nepal, which is blessed with some of the best paragliding sites like Sworek, we need more domestic, regional and international competitive events," said Sallendra Rawat, Secretary General at Nepal Paragliding and Hanggliding Association (a part of the



Photo: TH



well-known for producing juicy and sweet oranges that has earned Syangja its nickname of the 'orange grove of Nepal'. Many people back in the days came here to watch women singing 'wail' (the monsoon folk songs) while planting paddy in unison during the monsoon drizzle. Although, we didn't hear any *waalis* from the beautiful women of Syangja, every now and then, throughout the rugged paths, we came across groups of village women who had gathered around in their traditional *sarees*

continuously request from the emcee. Eventually, people began to have fun in their own terms. School children walked up to foreign players, interacting with them, trying to be accommodating and brushing up their English at the same time. It didn't take them long to mingle together, sing song and dance, take selfies and enjoy each other's company. "This is how we like to connect with the locals. We drop out of the sky and take selfies with them," shared one Lebanese pilot, Slima Ail. Media

organising team along with Babu Adventures and Nepal Aeronautics Association). Attempts to shift attention away from dedicated, conventional spots like Pokhara to often-isolated locations are integral to lodge an appealing imagery of a place to a wider audience. The entire zeal and enthusiasm reflected on each and every one present there was in part to put their tiny little village on the map. And that's exactly what they had accomplished by turning the entire host environment into a centre stage.



WHAT'S HOT

Revamped and refined



Shangri-La Hotel, Kathmandu re-introduced their bakery, The Shangri-La Bakery, with a wide variety of delicacies to delight one's taste buds. From muffins and croissants for your daily breakfast, to extravagant cakes for special occasions, the bakery aims at providing more options to their customers. Inaugurated by Miss Nepal pageant winners Sadichha Shrestha, Niti Shah and Sahara Basnet, the inaugural ceremony of the revamped bakery was followed by a high-tea where their new Executive Chef, Vikram Kumar was introduced. **Contact: 01-4412999**

Event

Getting on the Christmas spirit

Radisson Hotel Kathmandu held their annual cake mixing celebration on November 2 at the Pastry Shop. Marking a start to Christmas by organising the cake mixing or the fruit soaking event, the attendees got into the preparation of the Christmas cake while Christmas carols played in the background. Female Ambassadors, delegates and corporate wives were invited for the event and was followed by high tea with wines and take away goodies. **Contact: 01-4411818**



Palatable Indulgence

Manashi Pandit tries colourful spinach and mushroom stuffing with mozzarella and tender chicken skin

A simple way of reinventing your chicken dinner recipe, the mozzarella spinach, and mushroom stuffed chicken is one of many signature dishes of Rosemary Kitchen and Coffee Shop that has become an instant crowd favourite within a short time of its introduction. The tender and soft chicken is beautifully accompanied by the exceptionally well put together combination of white wine and chicken stock sauce along with the broccoli puree and mashed potatoes.

The beautiful marriage of carb, protein, and vegetable brings forth a dish that is both filling and tasty. Although the dish exudes sophistication, the overall preparation process is quick and can be easily replicated by all home cooks making it a perfect weeknight dinner for you and your family. Head Chef of Rosemary Kitchen and Coffee Bar, Atmaraj Parajuli shares, "Each element of the dish perfectly complements each other. The white wine sauce and broccoli puree



takes the dish into a whole new level." Talking about the healthy aspect of the dish, Chef Parajuli adds, "The chicken is baked and the entire dish consists of generous protein, calcium along with vegetables so it is suitable for health conscious people as well".

Prep time - 20-30 minutes
Cook time - 15-20 minutes
Serving - 2-3 people

INGREDIENTS
Chicken breast - 180 gm, Spinach - 15 gm, Mozzarella - 20 gm, Salt - To taste, Pepper - To taste, Button mushrooms - 2 to 3 pieces, Broccoli - 30 gm, White wine - 1 cup, Shallot - 1/2 piece, Garlic - 1 clove, Chicken stock - 1/2 cup, Butter - 60 gm, Potatoes - 50 gm, Cream - 10 gm, Nutmeg - To taste



Photo: TH

RECIPE

1. Mix finely chopped spinach, mushroom and mozzarella cheese into a large bowl along with salt and pepper to taste.
2. Place thin chicken breasts on a flat surface and spoon 1/4 of the spinach and mushroom mixture into the middle of the chicken breasts and fold it. Place in a greased baking pan and bake at 200° C for 15 minutes.
3. For the mashed potatoes, in a small saucepan heat butter. Add the mashed potatoes to the melted butter along with the cream and mix until smooth. Add salt and nutmeg to taste.
4. For broccoli puree, boil the broccoli in a pan for 10-15 minutes until soft. Remove it off the stove and blend finely using an electric blender. Add 20 gm melted butter and mix until creamy.
5. For the sauce, in a small saucepan, bring wine to a boil, add chicken stock and butter to it and gently whisk the mixture. Reduce the heat and let it simmer until slightly reduced. Add shallot and garlic to the sauce and cook in low heat. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and serve it hot.

FILED
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