



story
weaver

Dum Dum-a-Dum Biryani!

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Level 3

Basha and his sister Sainabi live in Hyderabad with their parents. Basha loves food. What he loves more is to *cook* food. He helps his Ammi in the kitchen everyday. He likes to watch her hands as they chop the brightly-coloured vegetables — plump red tomatoes, crisp green capsicums, firm orange carrots, fleshy pink onions...

“Mmmm!” Basha loves the tempting aromas that swirl around Ammi's kitchen as the dhals, rice, vegetables, meat, and spices change colour on the stove. He hopes that Ammi will give him a chance to cook a dish on his own someday.





One day, Basha and Sainabi come back from school to find Ammi asleep with high fever. Baba is not yet back from his office.

Ammi's mobile rings. Basha sees that Ammi's best friend Saira aunty is calling and answers it quickly. He does not want to wake Ammi up.

"I'm on my way back home from a wedding with lots of friends," Saira aunty explains. She sounds exhausted. "We will be passing by your home in about two hours' time. Do you think we can have dinner at your place? There are 24 of us - and 4 are vegetarian."

Basha knows that Ammi would love to see them. He and Sainabi are very fond of Saira aunty too. "You are most welcome," Basha says.



He feels excited as he hangs up the phone. This is his chance to cook a dish on his own! But will he be able to do it? He feels nervous. He opens the fridge and sees many of his favourite vegetables - cauliflower, peas, beans. He can also see a bunch of fresh mint leaves peeking out from under the carrots. "Yes!" he thinks to himself. "I have everything I need for a yummy Vegetable Dum Biryani!"

Basha has watched Ammi cook Vegetable Dum Biryani many times for their family of 4. But he now has to cook for 24 people! That is six times* the number of people Ammi usually cooks it for!

**(4+4+4+4+4+4 = 24. Or, 4x6 = 24)*

"That means," thinks Basha to himself, feeling a little nervous, "I have to cook the biryani six times!" Would he have enough time to do that?



As he starts to lay out six of every vessel he needs for the cooking, Sainabi appears at the kitchen door. "What are you up to?" she asks, frowning. When Basha explains to her what he is doing, she starts to laugh loudly.

"Buddhu!" she teases him. "You don't need to make the dish 6 times! You just have to have to make it ONCE, but with 6 times the quantities of all the ingredients needed."

Basha doesn't like to be teased by his smart little sister. Of COURSE he doesn't have to make the biryani six times! He could kick himself for his silly mistake. "I knew it all the time," he says quickly. "I just wanted to see if YOU knew it."

"Of course you did, Bhai," Sainabi says soothingly, but her eyes twinkle mischievously. "So, tell me, how much rice do we need for 4 people?"

"1.5 cups."

"Then you'll need $1.5 \times 6 = 9$ cups of rice for 24 people," Sainabi replies instantly.



Basha stares at her. How does Sainabi work out those numbers so quickly in her head? "That's right," he says gruffly, measuring out the rice into a big vessel. "Now, why don't you tell me how much we need of all the other ingredients too, and I will tell you if you are right."

"Sure, Bhai!" says Sainabi, running to get a pencil and paper. She loves it when her brother involves her in something he is doing. As Basha tells her the list of ingredients needed for four people, she calculates the quantities for 24.

"15 green beans for 4 people," calls out Basha.

"That means... $15 \times 6 = 90$ green beans for 24!" says Sainabi.

" $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of curd for 4 people."

"That means $\frac{3}{4} \times 6 = 0.75 \times 6 = 4.5$ cups of curd for 24," says Sainabi, working it out on her paper quickly. "I hope we have that much curd in the fridge."

"We do," says Basha. "Next..." Finally, they have measured out all the ingredients.



"Can you help me with the chopping too?" Basha asks, realizing that there are a lot of vegetables to be chopped.

"Of course, Bhai," grins Sainabi. Today is her lucky day!

Basha first soaks the fine orange strands of saffron in milk and the rice in water. He then joins Sainabi in chopping the vegetables. Then he turns on the stove and starts roasting the spices - cinnamon, cloves, green cardamoms, black cardamoms - and all the chopped vegetables, in ghee.

The familiar pleasant aromas of good food start to fill the house. Basha starts to gain confidence in himself. He can't wait to get to his favourite part now - layering and slow-cooking the half-cooked rice, spices and vegetables in a handi.

As Basha sets up the handi and starts to slow-cook it on the tawa, the doorbell rings. Before he and Sainabi can get to the door, Ammi has woken up and is greeting the guests with a surprised look on her face. Her surprise turns to worry as she realizes that they're here for dinner and she hasn't cooked anything.



She follows the pleasant smells and reaches the kitchen.

"Surprise!" shout Basha and Sainabi as they whip the lid off the handi. Ammi is stunned.

"Basha is a great cook, Ammi. He has made biryani! I helped him make it," Sainabi says. Basha smiles proudly at Ammi, thinking that his little sister is not so bad after all.

Ammi hugs Basha and Sainabi. "Mashallah!" she smiles. "I have two really fine kids. I am so proud of you both."

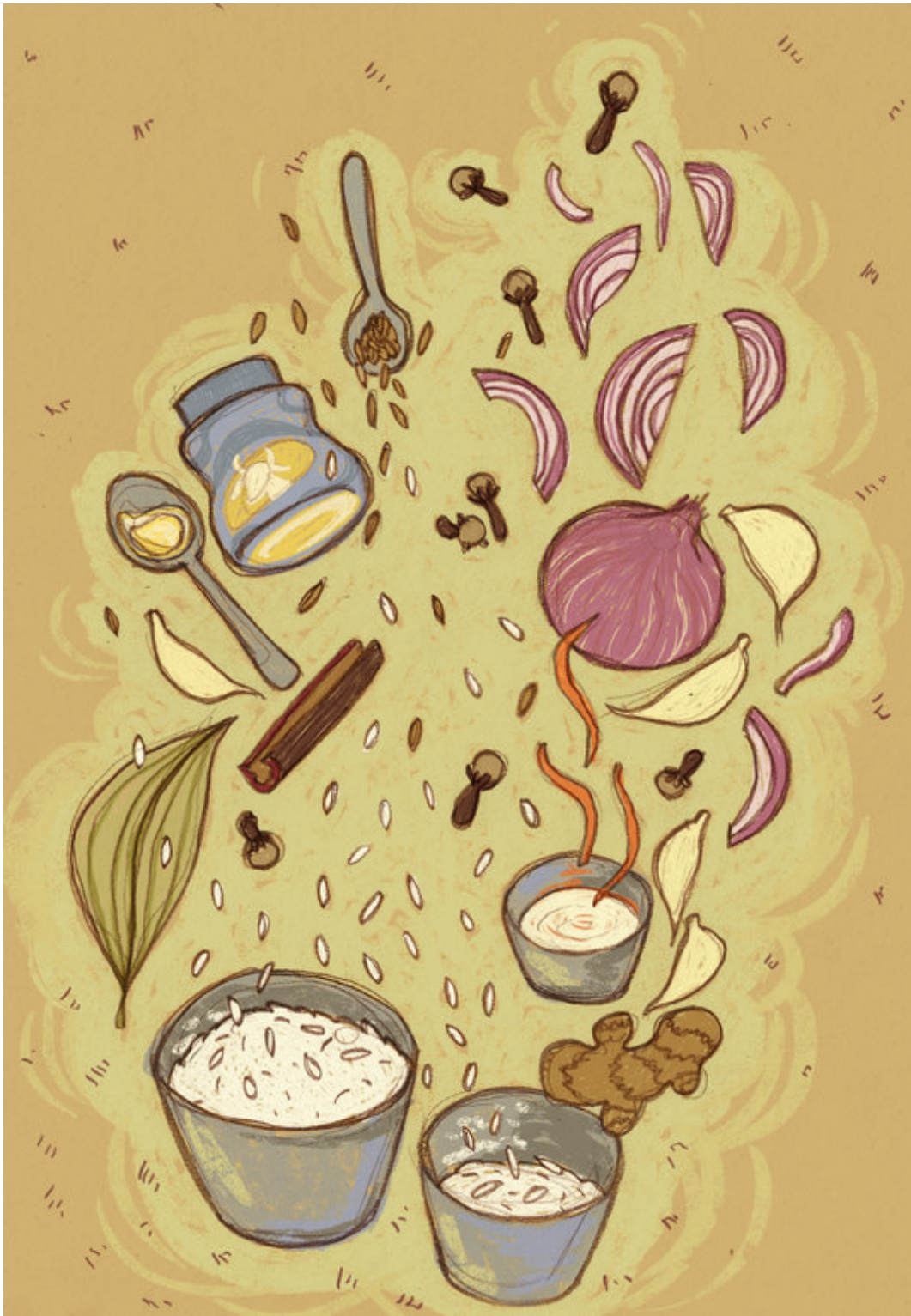
"Why don't you join Saira aunty and the others, Ammi?" says Basha.

"Sainabi and I will serve you all." Sainabi nods eagerly. Maybe Bhai will ask her to help him with more things from now on! She can't stop smiling at the thought.

"This is the best Dum Biryani we've ever had!" say Saira aunty and her friends.

"I agree - 100 percent!" says Ammi, licking her fingers. Basha and Sainabi are all smiles!





Cook with Basha and Sainabi!

Guess what! Basha and Sainabi's Ammi sweetly agreed to share her Dum Biryani recipe with us! Be sure there is an adult around when you try it. **Ingredients (for a biryani that serves 4):**

- Basmati rice - 1 1/2 cups, soaked in water
- Hot milk with 3 strands of saffron soaking in it - 2 tbsp*
- Water - 4 cups
- Ghee - 4 tbsp
- Onion - 1, sliced
- Shahi Jeera - 1/2 tsp**
- Bay leaf - 1
- Cinnamon - 2 inch stick
- Cloves - 8
- Ginger-garlic paste - 1 1/2 tbsp
- Mixed vegetables (cauliflower, beans, carrots, peas) - 3 cups, chopped
- Tomato - 2 small, chopped
- Green chilli - 1, chopped

**tbsp = tablespoon*

***tsp = teaspoon*



- Spice powders (Garam masala - 1 tsp; Haldi powder - 1/2 tsp; Dhaniya powder - 1 tbsp)
- Curd - 3/4 cup
- Mint leaves - 2 tbsp, chopped
- Coriander leaves - 1 tbsp, chopped
- Cashews and raisins - 5 each
- Green cardamom - 5
- Black cardamom - 1
- Milk - 2 tbsp
- Salt - 1 1/2 tsp

Start cooking!

1. Heat half the ghee in a pan and fry the onions until browny-gold. Keep aside.
2. In the same pan, heat the rest of the ghee. Fry shahi jeera, bay leaves, cinnamon and cloves in it. Add ginger garlic paste and fry for 2 minutes.
3. Add the mixed vegetables, tomato and green chilli and fry for 3 minutes.
4. Add all the spice powders. Fry well for 2 minutes.
5. Pour the curd and half the salt into the pan and mix well. Cover and cook on low flame for about 10 minutes, until the vegetables are soft but not mushy.

6. Take the pan off the stove and add mint and coriander leaves into it.
7. In a separate pan, boil the water. Add the rest of the salt, black cardamoms and the green cardamoms.
8. Drain the soaked rice, add it to the boiling water, and cook for 8 minutes with the pan uncovered. When the rice is almost cooked, drain it through a colander* .
9. In a handi** whose size is just right to hold the biryani, begin layering. In Layer 1, put 1/3rd of the cooked vegetable mix (from step 5) and 1/3rd of the cashews and raisins. In Layer 2, put 1/3rd of the cooked rice (step 8), topped with 1/3rd of the fried onions (step 1) and 1/3rd of saffron milk. Keep alternating Layers 1 and 2 until you have six layers.
10. Cover the handi and place it on a hot tava. Cook for 5 minutes on a medium flame and another 7 minutes on a low flame.
11. Remove the handi from the stove and mix the biryani until the colours of the spices are uniformly distributed.
12. The Vegetable Dum Biryani is now ready to serve!!

**Colander: A vessel with small holes at the bottom to drain water*

***Handi: A deep and wide-mouthed cooking vessel*



Are you a food math wiz?

Can you cook up a delicious biryani for 24 like Basha did? No? Never mind. Maybe you can help him calculate the quantities of various ingredients he needs, like Sainabi did. Go on, try it!

1. If Basha needs 1 onion for a biryani for 4 people, how many will he need for a biryani for 24 people?
2. If Basha needs 72 florets of cauliflower for biryani that serves 24, how many florets should he put into a biryani that serves 3?
3. If the recipe says to put in $\frac{3}{4}$ cups of curd for a biryani for 6 people, how much curd should we put into a biryani for 48 people?
4. To make biryani for 5 people, you need 4 tbsp of ghee. If Basha puts in 32 tsps, how many people is he cooking for?
5. A biryani that serves 8 needs 2 two-inch sticks of cinnamon. How many two-inch sticks are required for a biryani that serves 64?

Once you're done calculating, check for answers in the next page. No cheating, okay?



Answers:

1. 6 onions
2. 9 florets
3. 6 cups
4. 40 people
5. 16 sticks

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The Oracle logo, consisting of the word "ORACLE" in white, uppercase letters on a red rectangular background.

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Dum Dum-a-Dum Biryani!

(English)

Basha and Sainabi are in a panic. Ammi is ill, and Saira aunty has just announced that she is arriving for lunch - with 23 other people! Budding chef Basha thinks he can cook Ammi's Dum Biryani, but her recipe only makes enough for 4 people. Math wiz Sainabi jumps in to help, declaring that she knows how to turn a 4-person recipe to a 24-person recipe. Do the siblings succeed in serving up a truly Dum Dum-a-Dum biryani? Read this book to find out!

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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