

If you only have 15 minutes ...

Identify how the *Ni'matnāma* is more than a cookbook and explain, using textual evidence, how its recipes and techniques influence modern cooking.

Observe (3 minutes)

Skim the article, *From Sultan's Kitchen to Delhi Streets: How the Ni'matnāma Lives ON,* taking note of phrases that describe the manuscript's unique features. Record several phrases below that describe how it influences modern street cooking in the India and abroad.¹

Discuss (10 minutes)

A Royal Cookbook Ahead of Its Time

Cite evidence from the text that explains how the *Ni'matnāma* served as more than a collection of recipes.²

From Royal Manuscript to Everyday Food Recipes

Provide two examples of how cooks in Old Delhi's street stalls have adapted techniques from the *Ni'matnāma*.³

Modernizing the *Ni'matnāma* With Traditional Ingredients

How have cooks such as Sadaf Hussain followed *Ni'matnāma* recipes while adapting them for modern dishes?⁴

Reflect (2 minutes)

Which aspect of Moruga Hill Rice's story—preservation, cultural/historical roots, or the blend of tradition and innovation—stood out to you the most? Why?⁵

Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

1 Possible text examples:

- The essence of the dish has remained remarkably the same, but in Hussain's kitchen, goat qima remains the centerpiece, keeping him tethered to the sultan's table across five centuries.
- Even without precise written instructions, the recipes survived through memory and practice. Their echoes can still be tasted in Old Delhi's bustling streets.
- Across these lanes, samosas, halvas, puris and biryanis form a living archive of flavors and methods that reflect the *Ni'matnāma's* world—even if most cooks have never heard its name.
- Back in his own kitchen, Hussain prepares khichdi—another dish recorded in the manuscript.
- He then turns to halva. This manuscript version combines rice flour, roasted gram flour and whole wheat flour, sweetened with dates, molasses and sugar.
- For historians and chefs alike, the *Ni'matnāma* serves as both culinary guide and cultural map, preserving trade routes, ingredients and regional techniques.
- As Hussain plates the final spoonful of halva, he sums up the manuscript's essence: "Techniques are timeless, but the soul of a dish lies in how it's prepared." In his hands, the *Ni'matnāma* lives on—its flavors still vivid, its methods still relevant, its legacy still shared across kitchens and centuries.

2 The *Ni'matnāma* was illustrated with 50 jewel-toned miniature paintings. This made the culinary knowledge accessible to those who couldn't read. The illustrations also preserved details of kitchen tools, serving rituals and table arrangements. The book also offered instructions for making medicines, sherbets, perfumes and aphrodisiacs.

3 Sanjay Agarwal prepares tiny crisp puris with soft semolina halva cooked over a low, careful heat equivalent to the heat of a couple of candles.

Zuhaib Hassan makes both savory qima samosas and sweet *khoya* samosa stuffed with milk solids and dried fruit. Mince-meat stuffing remains a top seller.

These dishes form a living archive of flavors and methods that reflect the *Ni'matnāma's* world.

4 Modern day recipes for khichdi call for more rice than lentils. Sadaf Hussain follows the original *Ni'matnāma* recipe with more lentils than rice. He also uses molasses in his making of halva. Lacking camphor and musk—rare today—he substitutes *meetha attar*, maintaining the rich, layered fragrance.

5 Possible Answers:

- Being ahead of its time: The broad information contained in the *Ni'matnāma* on making medicines, sherberts, perfumes and aphrodisiacs are influential. The illustrations show details of kitchen tools, serving rituals and table arrangements. The *Ni'matnāma* gave access to those who couldn't read.
- Adapting *Ni'matnāma's* techniques to modern dishes: Sanjay Agarwal cooks semolina halva over a low, careful heat equivalent to the heat of a couple of candles.
- Using *Ni'matnāma's* ingredients in modern dishes: The way modern cooks have gone back to the traditional recipes of the *Ni'matnāma* in common dishes is inspiring.