



DECEMBER 2025

Chikubara

GROWING HEALTHY AND RESPONSIBLE



In this issue

Swipe's phone is dead, the mountains are cold—find out how the Chadar Trek helps one boy log off and live a little! In December, it is winter season in California. What are the seasons across the globe? What does winter do to your body?

Find answers to these questions through stories, pictures, activities, and experiments in this issue.

DEAR parents, teachers, uncles, and aunts

Please print a copy of this magazine and share it with kids in your life...

About Chikubara

The Dancing Chef has always strived to bring food, family, and fitness together in our products. That's why we, a family business, decided to publish Chikubara, a magazine to celebrate our passion for educating children about healthy and responsible eating.

Incidentally, Chiku is the nickname of 3 of the 4 people in our team. Also, we all love the fruit, Sapota, which is called Chiku in several Indian languages. We could eat a dozen Chikus in one sitting (don't try this at home). The word for a dozen or the number 12 in many Indian languages is bara.

Hence the name **Chikubara**

Kalyani
writer, designer,
illustrator



Sagar
editor



Two out of the three Chikus are wondering why we don't get chiku, the fruit, in USA?

Akhil
thinker,
writer, editor



Maya
approver (who rejects most of our work)



SCAN



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Chikubara

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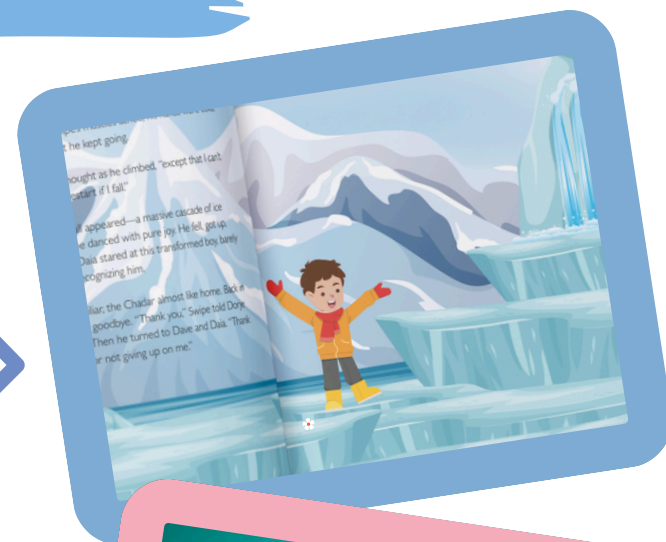
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DETECTIVES
Dave and Daia



SWIPE AWAY FROM SCREEN



Games, cartoons, and endless scrolling for the next digital thrill.. that was the life of a boy named— let's just call him Swipe.

He knew every character in every cartoon show but not his classmates' names. His fingers performed magic on racing games but fumbled with forks at the dinner table.. half the food spilling on its way from the plate to his mouth.



His verdict on the world? Outdoors—boring. Friends—unnecessary.
Rainbows—dull.

His favorite place in the world was his room; a jungle of tangled
charging cables and fossilized snack wrappers. There, disconnected
from reality, he stayed connected to the World Wide Web.



Swipe's parents tried to break his screen addiction with screen time limits, hiding chargers, and taking him to the best amusement parks. All in vain. Swipe stayed glued to his screen.

In desperation, they turned for help to their neighborhood detectives Dave and Daia, who were famous for their smart wits and even smarter gadgets.



Upon hearing the case, the detectives exchanged glances. Swipe's screen obsession was a local legend. While they were usually thrilled by a challenge, this time they had other plans.

"We appreciate your trust," Dave began, "but we're heading to the Chadar Trek soon. It's a grueling expedition over a frozen river in the Himalayas. The frozen river looks like a blanket of ice.... the word for blanket in Hindi is chadar... So, we won't—"



“Perfect!” Swipe’s parents exclaimed, cutting Dave off mid-sentence.

“Take him with you, please.”

He’ll learn discipline!

Resilience!

No screens in the wilderness!

They could already picture their son transformed.



Despite their protests, Dave and Daia found themselves stuck with a companion who cared only about his screen. They grumbled to their Grandma who merely smiled. “Don’t bother Swipe and don’t get bothered by him. You won’t even need your gadgets to solve this case.. just focus on your trek,” she advised, eyes twinkling.

The journey started from New Delhi and continued towards Leh. Dave and Daia marveled at the changing landscapes—lush farms in Punjab, dense forests in the Himalayan foothills, snow-clad mountains. Swipe remained cocooned in his digital bubble, his face bathed in the blue glow of his phone.





The first blow to Swipe's digital world came in Leh. Getting out felt like stepping into a refrigerator. In layers of sweaters and jackets he looked like a stuffed toy and mittens meant fuzzy swiping—no more games, only cartoons.





After three days of acclimatization, they started the Chadar Trek over the Zaskar River. The river wound through towering canyons, its surface frozen solid in some sections, while flowing swiftly in others. Walking on ice in gumboots felt like being a penguin.



“Ouch!” Dave slipped while setting up his navigation system, landing flat on his backpack.

Before Daia could giggle, she slipped too, her camera taking a holy dip in bone-chilling water.

Swipe, clutching his screen tightly, slipped just like them.

All three sat on the frozen river, bottoms going numb, sharing their first real laugh together. The gadgets went back into the backpacks—including Swipe’s screen.



That evening they reached the campsite at Chilling (the name lived up to the feeling). Swipe rushed to his tent with his screen. But the brutal cold had drained the battery—and his energy. Snack bars and juice didn't help.

Shivering and exhausted, he stumbled to the kitchen tent.

A warm hand touched his back. Dorje, their Zanskari guide, offered him a bowl of Thukpa—hot noodle soup. Swipe eyed it suspiciously, but his tired body overruled his picky eating habits. He gulped it down, followed by steaming yak butter tea.

The meal was unfamiliar, but something felt right. For the first time in forever, warmth and comfort came not from a glowing screen but from a simple bowl and human kindness.

Swipe sat quietly, thinking. That night, swaddled in sleeping bags, he was restless. Sleep remained elusive.



The next morning, after a hearty breakfast of Mokthuk (momos in soup) and Khambir (wheat bread) with apricot jam, they trekked from Chilling to Tib Cave. The kids were already better at walking on ice—practice worked. Suddenly Dorje stopped everyone and motioned them to take a longer detour. The ice ahead of him started cracking.



“How did he know the ice would crack?” Swipe asked Tenzin, the other guide. It was his first real question in days and everyone was surprised to hear him speak.

“The river told him,” Tenzin chuckled. “We feel the difference between hard ice and current flowing beneath. Dorje felt the current. But don’t worry about the cracks until that boulder over there. It’s safe up till there.”

“And how does the river tell you that?” Daia pressed.

Dorje grinned. “The snow leopard told us that.”
“Snow leopard?” the kids chorused. Swipe involuntarily drew closer to Dave. Tenzin pointed at tracks on the ice. “Snow leopard tracks mean safe ice. Also, white opaque ice is stable. We tap with our sticks—‘thud-thud’ means solid ice. Thin ice gives a sharp ring.”

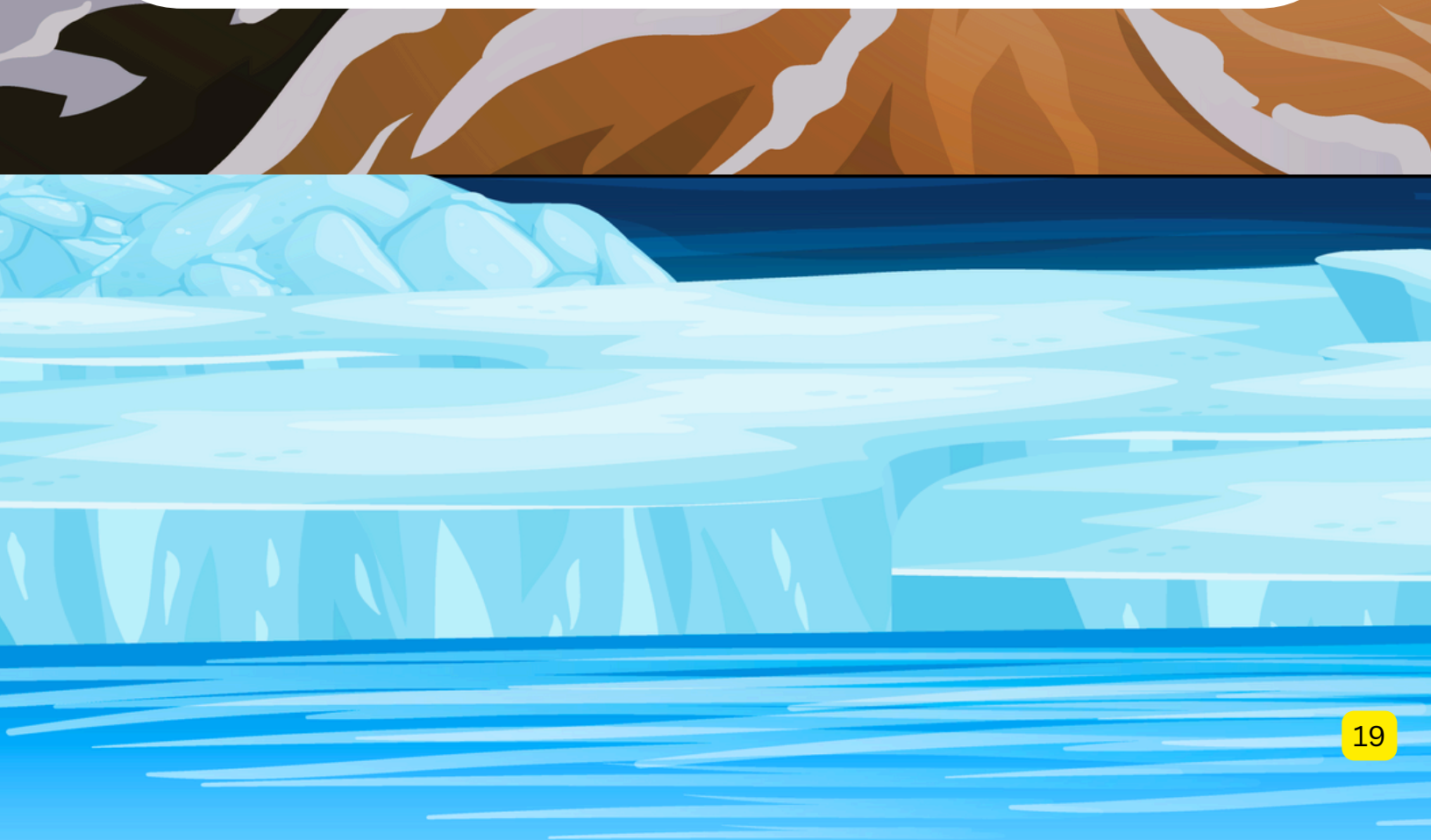
“Where did you learn this?” Dave asked. “You don’t use any gadgets.”

Dorje laughed. “My parents, uncles - aunts, and grandparents taught me. Zanskari kids ‘graduate’ when they complete their first Chadar journey. This frozen river was our only connection to the outside world for six months each year when mountain passes closed.”

“So you learned by doing,” Dave said thoughtfully, “Not from screens or books, but from living it.”

“And by listening,” Daia added. “To the ice, the river, the animals.”

Swipe stayed quiet, but his eyes were wide, processing. He thought about his own “education”—levels conquered, achievements unlocked, all virtual. These guides had learned by living, by doing, by listening to the world itself.



That evening, he didn't retreat to his tent. He stayed in the kitchen tent, eating Thukpa and listening to stories about the Ice Queen who protects travelers, about ibex scrambling on cliffs, about surviving brutal winters.

That night, he slept deeply.

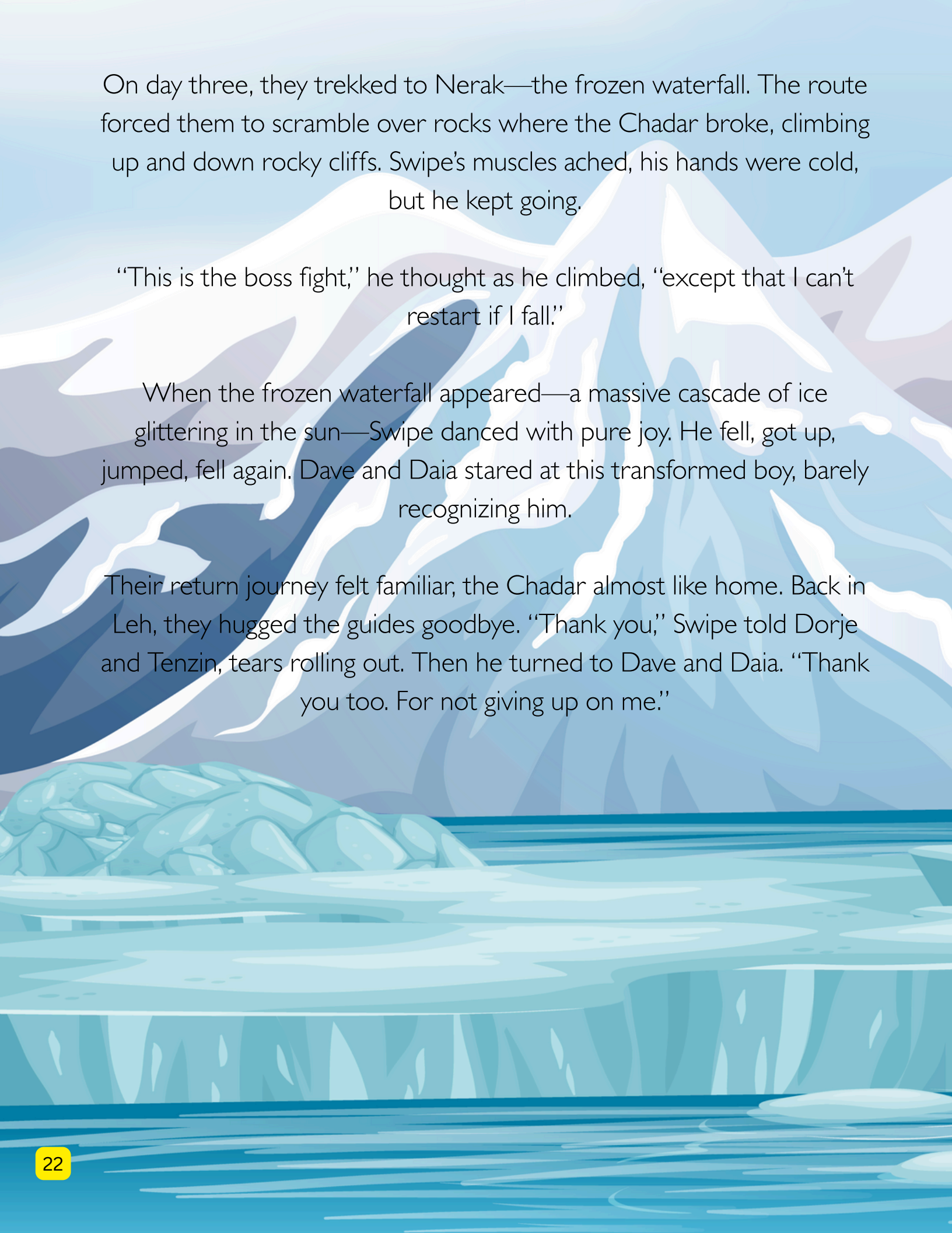
At midnight, when he crawled out of the tent to pee, he saw the frozen river glittering like a diamond necklace. The sky blazed with stars—more stars than he'd ever imagined existed.

Tears rolled down his cheeks. He felt small yet connected to something immense and ancient. His own legs had carried him through this incredible landscape—a satisfaction no screen, no game, no video had ever given. He felt strong. He felt alive. He felt wonder.

The cold made his bottom numb and he hurried back, but he was changed.







On day three, they trekked to Nerak—the frozen waterfall. The route forced them to scramble over rocks where the Chadar broke, climbing up and down rocky cliffs. Swipe's muscles ached, his hands were cold, but he kept going.

“This is the boss fight,” he thought as he climbed, “except that I can’t restart if I fall.”

When the frozen waterfall appeared—a massive cascade of ice glittering in the sun—Swipe danced with pure joy. He fell, got up, jumped, fell again. Dave and Daia stared at this transformed boy, barely recognizing him.

Their return journey felt familiar, the Chadar almost like home. Back in Leh, they hugged the guides goodbye. “Thank you,” Swipe told Dorje and Tenzin, tears rolling out. Then he turned to Dave and Daia. “Thank you too. For not giving up on me.”



His phone lay forgotten, battery drained. But Swipe was fully charged. He watched the landscape change from mountains to foothills to farms to city, really seeing it for the first time.



When they finally arrived home, Grandma was waiting. She looked at the kids. A knowing smile played on her lips. “How was the case?”

“Did you mean trek, Grandma?” Dave said. “It was fabulous! And we didn’t do anything to solve the ‘case.’ We didn’t even use our gadgets, just focused on our trek, exactly as you told us.”

Grandma chuckled. “Some cases are not solved with gadgets or detective work. but they’re solved by going beyond your comfort zone and living life together—the Chadar Trek teaches what no screen ever could.”



FUN FACTS



Chadar trek: Frozen Zaskar river

CHADAR TREK

The Chadar Trek is a winter trek in Ladakh, India, that takes place over the frozen Zaskar River.



Snow leopard

Trekkers walk approximately 200km in extreme winter conditions with temperatures below -20°C .

This remote Himalayan region is home to a variety of human settlements, animals, and birds.



A Boy from Leh on a yak

IN SUMMER

The frozen Zaskar river thaws and a lot of water flows rapidly. The river valley becomes lush green with new vegetation and pleasant temperatures.



Zaskar river in summer

Local people celebrate festivals that showcase the triumph of good over evil through rituals, masked dances, and traditional performances.



A woman from Zaskar



Chadar trek: Frozen Zaskar river

Due to climate change the freezing of Zaskar and stable ice formation has become unreliable. Excessive human activities are damaging the ecosystem. What could we do to protect it?

ACROSS THE GLOBE

DECEMBER

season and produce



ALMONDS, PISTACHIOS, WALNUT

California

Mild winter and rains. Citrus fruits, nuts, broccoli, leafy greens are a plenty.



BROCCOLI



ACAI



JABUTICABA



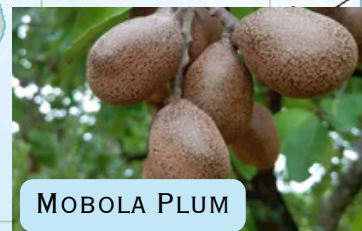
ANTARCTIC PEARLWORT



CENTRAL PARK, NYC

New York

Freezing temperatures and snowfall. Produce comes from cold storage or other places.



MOBOLA PLUM



CAPE GOOSEBERRY

South Africa

Peak summer. Cherries, peppers, stone fruits, cape gooseberries, mobola plum are harvested

Antarctica

ANTARCTICA

24 hr sunlight, the sun never sets, yet max temperature is -10°C . Lichens, mosses, flowering plants grow but they are not edible for humans.



MEDLAR



FISHING IN FROZEN LAKE



DRIED MUSHROOMS



KALE

Netherlands

Freezing temperatures but hardy winter crops like kale, cabbage, potatoes grow while medlars harvested in Autumn begin to ripen.

Lake Baikal, Russia

Extreme cold. Omul, a type of fish, is traditionally caught through ice fishing as the lake freezes. Storage crops like potatoes, dried mushrooms, and berries are used.

BURDOCK



Japan

Cold weather. Oranges, persimmons, daikon radish, lotus root, burdock in season.



LOTUS ROOT



Mumbai, India

Pleasant temperatures with tender green sorghum, wheat, amla, chickpeas harvested.

SORGHUM

AMLA

Egypt

Pleasant temperatures. Wheat, fava beans, citrus fruits, grapes, etc. are harvested.

WHEAT

FAVA BEANS

KAWISTA

Indonesia

Peak rainy season. Fruits like Kawista (wood apple), Sirsak, Menteng, Kedondong are plenty.

MENTENG

STAR FRUIT



RED CURRANTS

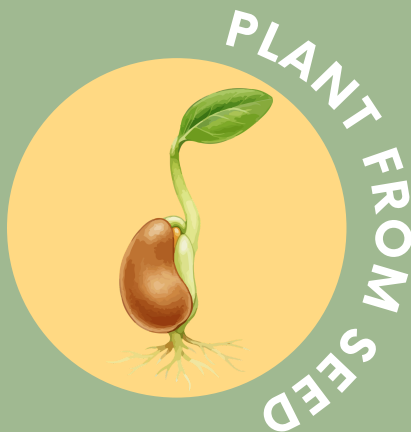


Sydney, Australia

Summer brings plenty of berries, fruits, veggies, herbs. Starfruit and currants also harvested.

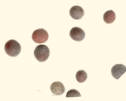







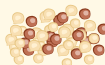




GROW YOUR OWN

1



Start a treasure hunt for seeds hiding right in your pantry. Use the seeds mentioned in the card below for reference, or find your own! Collect 2–3 seeds of each type in separate bowls.

SEEDS

 Mustard	 Sunflower	 Fennel	 Kidney Bean	 Corn
 Flax seeds	 Peanuts	 Chickpea	 Quinoa	 Wheat
 Peas	 Mung Bean	 Amaranth	Your choice	Your choice

Important Rule: DO NOT use seeds that have been roasted, salted, boiled, or cooked. They won't grow!

2

Using small pots, sow your seeds just beneath the soil's surface, place the pots in a sunny spot, and water daily to keep the soil consistently moist until the seedlings sprout.



?

28



Send a picture of you and your plant:
hello@thedancingchef.me

How many seeds germinated and when? Why do you think some seeds sprouted and others did not?

MAKE YOUR OWN

HOT POT

Mix veg soup



1 TAKE YOUR FAVORITE VEGGIES AND WASH THEM WELL.



2 WITH THE HELP OF AN ADULT CHOP THE VEGGIES INTO SMALL PIECES.

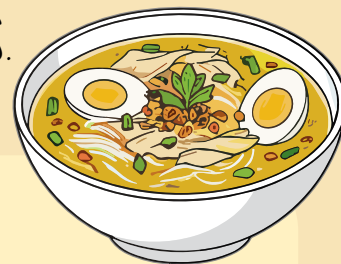


3 ADD THE CHOPPED VEGGIES AND SOME WATER IN A LARGE COOKING POT AND BRING IT TO BOIL.




4 ONCE IT BOILS, ADD SALT AND PEPPER AS PER YOUR TASTE, AND STIR WELL. LET IT BOIL FOR TWO MORE MINUTES.



5 SERVE HOT, IN A SOUP BOWL. CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT FLAVORS WHILE DRINKING IT?



OPTIONAL

-  Add noodles, tofu, meat, etc. to the veggies.
-  Garnish with herbs or boiled eggs.
-  For more flavor options try adding soya sauce or chile sauce to the bowl.

WINTER

INSIDE YOU

What does it do to your mind and body?



More sleep

When weather gets cold, your body has to work harder to maintain its temperature. Hence you tire faster and need more sleep.



More clothes

Cold uses up the energy reserves that your body built up. If you don't wear warm clothes in winter then you will shiver, feel tired and sluggish, and be prone to falling ill.



More moisturizer

Cold air and indoor heat are very dry, and they suck the moisture right out of your skin, making it dry and itchy.



More nutrition

Your body needs nutritious food to create the additional energy needed in winter.



More Activities

Your body needs to stay active to keep warm. When it's too cold to play outside, you can enjoy indoor activities like music, board games, and obstacle courses with friends.

Have you noticed?

Nuts are harvested in fall, they are rich in nutrition, and can be stored for months. It is nature's way of providing nutrition to all (yes to birds and animals alike) in harsh winters.



Winter Care

Winters bring snow in some places, pleasant temperatures in others, and festive times across the globe. Stay fit to enjoy it.

Winter care checklist

Stay healthy and happy in winters with the following tips:



Get more sleep

Sleep strengthens your body's immune system



Eat fresh and hot food

Nuts, dairy, meat too.



Drink enough water

6-8 glasses a day



Stay warm and active

To keep sickness away



Use heating wisely

Too much heat can dry out your skin

How much heating to use?

Day time thermostat setting: 18 to 20 °C

Excessive indoor temperatures can negatively affect your body, your household energy use, and the environment. You'll also feel a bigger "thermal shock" when going outside.

Night time thermostat setting: 17 to 19 °C

Excessive heating can make your nose, throat, and skin dry and itchy, and increase the risk of catching a cold.

Ref: <https://www.energy.gov/>

Why do pumpkins grow just before winter?

Pumpkins mature over the long, warm summer and ripen in fall. They have healthy fats and carbohydrates that provide nutrition for the colder days. The whole uncut pumpkin can be stored for over four months without refrigeration. This ensures adequate nutrition for the harsh winter months.

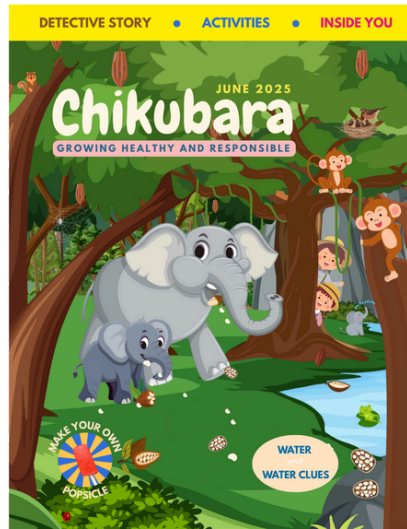
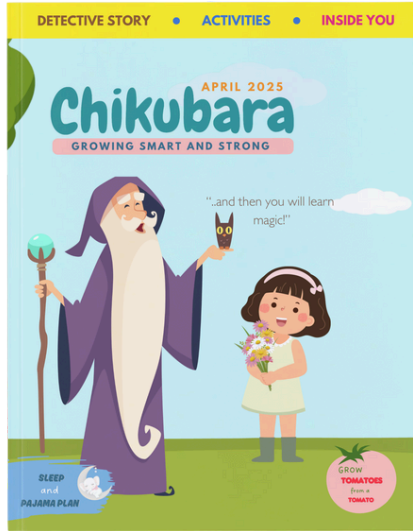
Clues from nature

What three clues can you spot in nature around you (animals, birds, or trees) to combat winters in your location?

You can cut this page and put it on a wall to help you enjoy winters



Check out other issues



FIND YOUR MIX



www.thedancingchef.me

SCAN



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