

DETECTIVE STORY



ACTIVITIES



INSIDE YOU

OCTOBER 2025

Chikubara

GROWING HEALTHY AND RESPONSIBLE



GROW YOUR OWN



SPRING ONIONS

INSIDE YOU



RUNNY NOSE

In this issue

How did Fica and Feid become Horri-Fica and Horri-Feid in a spooky forest? In October, it is Fall season in California. What are the seasons across the globe? Why do you get a runny nose and how to keep colds away?

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 chikus now look different than their pictures here, but we have no plans to update their photos.



Akhil
thinker, writer,
editor



Maya
approver (who rejects most of our work)

SCAN



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The digital version is currently free for download from www.thedancingchef.me



Chikubara

OCTOBER 2025



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Find Chikubara at www.thedancingchef.me



DETECTIVES
Dave and Daia



THE SPOOKY FOREST



The twins, Fica and Feid, loved camping—and hated rules. Stay on trail? They went off-trail “just to see what’s there.” Don’t walk on grass? They did it anyway because it was “faster.” Don’t pluck wildflowers? They made bouquets to decorate their tent. Don’t litter? They dropped candy wrappers everywhere. Feid even carved “FEID RULES” into a birch tree “so everyone remembers us,” as though that made it cool.



Other kids came to the riverside campground for adventure and exploration. Fica and Feid came to scare kids with spooky stories. Every night by the fire, they told scary stories in big, booming voices. “The Grave-Digger’s Hand!” “The Cabin in the Mist!” They piled on the drama. They piled on the sound effects. They did not pile their trash into the bin.

The detectives Dave and Daia were at the campgrounds too. Everyone knew them for their sharp wits and even sharper gadgets.

By night two, Daia was so annoyed with the horror stories that she named the twins **Horri-Fica** and **Horri-Feid**.



On the third evening, as Fica launched into a tale about haunted lumberjack boots that made THWACK—THWACK sounds near the old pine trees, Daia held up a hand. “Enough. If you keep trying to frighten kids in the forest, the forest will show you what frightened feels like.”

Feid snorted, “what's it going to do—tell us a spooky story back?”

“Ooooh,” Fica cackled, tossing a candy wrapper into the leaves.
“Hear that, Feid? Detective Daia just cursed us.”



The next morning, Feid gave last night's campfire a lazy kick and called it "clean." Fica grabbed her kayak paddle and life vest and—of course—veered off-trail towards the river, crunching over leaves because the sound was satisfying.

The forest was very quiet. The kind of quiet that makes your footsteps sound too loud.

Then came a sound: THWACK—THWACK—THWACK. Not quite hammering. Not quite knocking. Very steady. Very close. Very similar, Fica couldn't help thinking, to the haunted lumberjack boots in her tale.



Fica stiffened. She peeked around a thicket and saw it
—a huge, fuzzy, shifting shadow on the forest floor,
long as a giant's cape, with wiggly hands and sharp
teeth. The THWACK sounds grew louder.

Fica dropped her paddle and life vest and ran.





“Feid! Ha...hau...haunted lumberjack!” she gasped, skidding into camp. “I heard him and saw a ghost shadow!”

Feid puffed himself up. “A ghost shadow? It’s probably a weird stump. I’ll go and check.” He swaggered off-trail towards the river, snapping twigs as he went.

And then he heard it! THWACK—THWACK—THWACK. A long shadow lay ahead.

Before Feid could say “Boo,” the trees erupted—jays screeched, squirrels chattered, small birds zigzagged and scolded from branches. They circled and swooped over his head. Surely, it was an attack?

He did not swagger back to camp. He sprinted.



By the time he returned, Feid had recovered his breath and most of his wits.

He smoothed his hair. “Yes, well, there was a shadow. And some very rude birds. Totally normal. Not scary at all.”

The next morning, Fica went to the river again. The forest repeated itself: silence, THWACK—THWACK—THWACK, the ghostly shadow, scolding animals. She ran back. “Daia’s curse is REAL!”

Feid stalled until lunch. Sandwiches make everyone braver. In the afternoon, they returned together. No shadow. No sounds. Just dragonflies and sunlight.

“See?” Feid announced. “Imagination.”





On the third morning, Fica and Feid marched out
humming a victory song.

“Did this silly old forest really think we’d be scared?”
they snickered.

The forest answered.
THWACK—THWACK—THWACK.
Shadow. Wings. Chatter. Swoop!

They panicked, spun around—and ran smack into
Dave and Daia.



“Detectives!” Feid yelled. “Please reverse your curse! The forest is—” he waved his arms—”doing things. And the ghost nearly got us.”

“There are no curses,” Dave said firmly. “Only mysteries we haven’t solved yet.”

“Let’s go meet your ghost,” Daia said, picking up her backpack full of gadgets.

This time they all walked quietly on-trail. As leaves crunched underfoot, the sound began:
THWACK—THWACK—THWACK.

A long shadow slid across the ground.

“This is it,” the twins exclaimed together and ran off.



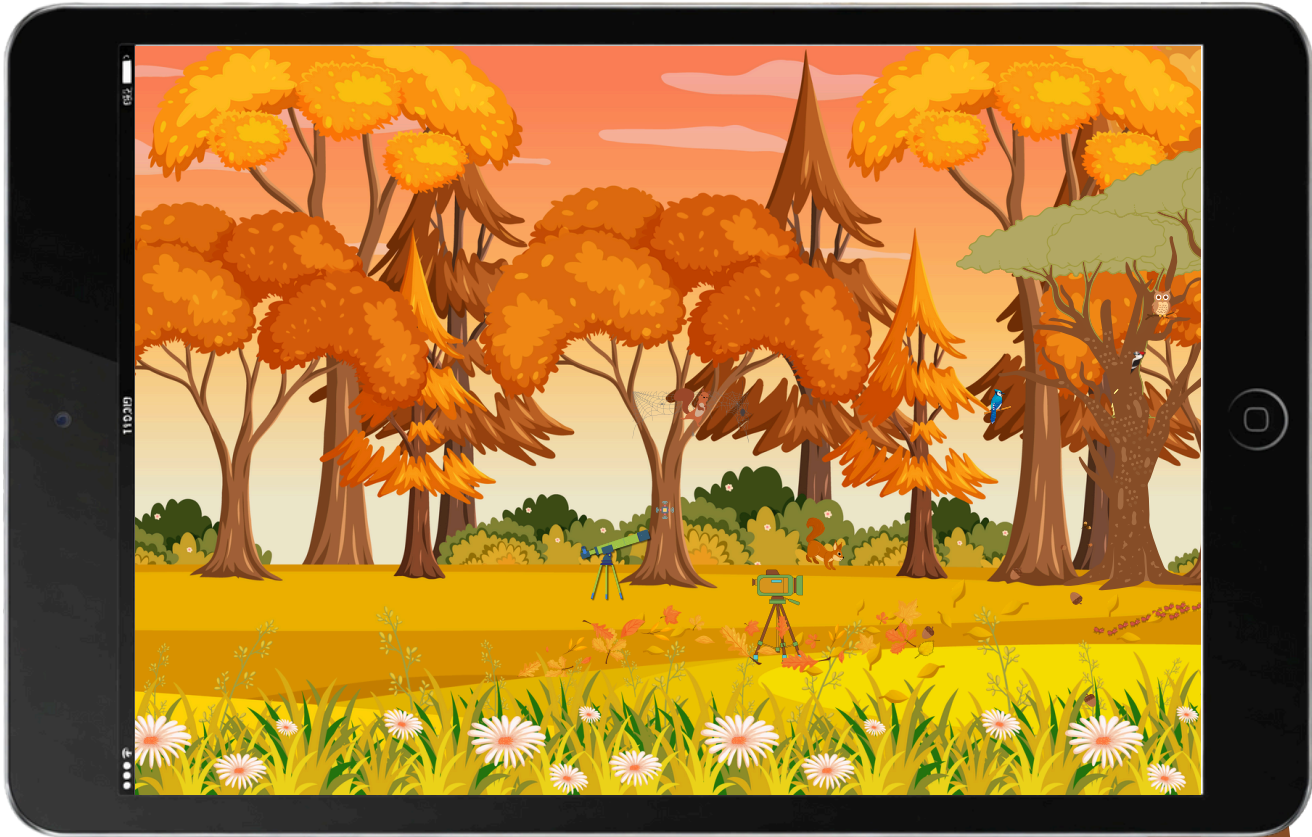


Not wanting to go off-trail, Daia set up a timelapse camera to record the shadow and sent drones to investigate the thwacking sound.

“That sound has a perfect beat,” said Dave, placing more sensors. “Too steady for spooky boots.

“The gadgets are in place,” said Daia,”
Let’s check back after lunch.”

As the sun climbed higher, the sounds softened and shadows disappeared. By lunchtime, the forest looked totally ordinary.



After lunch, the detectives reviewed the drone footage.

“Dave, look,” Daia whispered. A tall stone pine came into view, covered with tiny, neat holes. Some were stuffed with acorns, others empty like little cubbies.

“A granary tree,” breathed Dave. “A pantry!”

A flash of red zipped by—thwack, thwack, thwack . A bird placed an acorn into a hole.

The detectives looked at each other and smiled. “The haunted lumberjack boots... not so spooky after all.”

They returned with Horri-Fica and Horri-Feid at dawn. Soon the shadows appeared and thwacking started.

“Time to get out of here,” declared Fica as Feid grew pale.

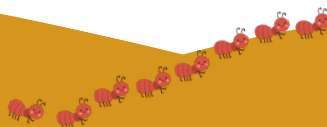
Dave adjusted his binoculars while Daia worked her computer.

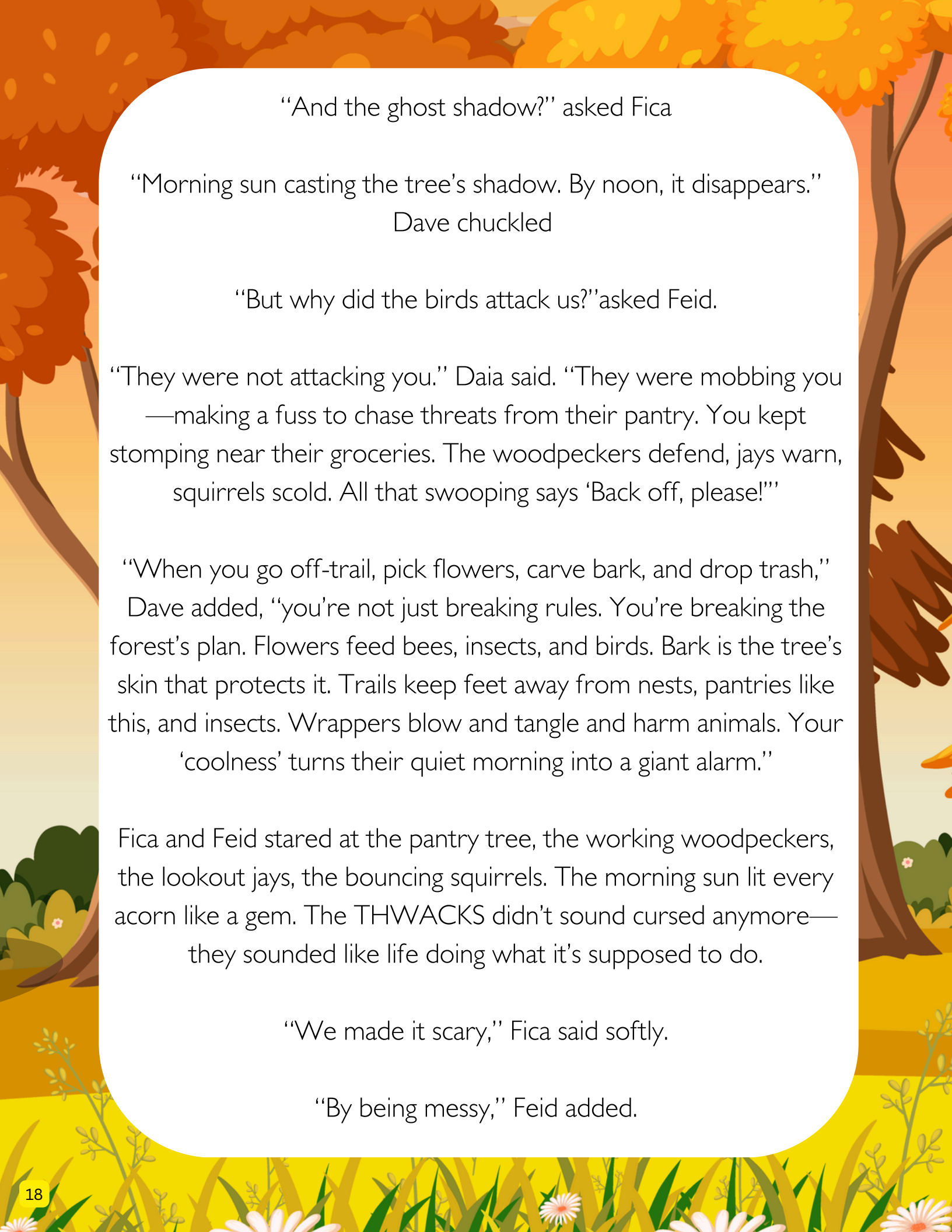
“See for yourself,” said Dave, handing over the binoculars.



“Acorn Woodpeckers,” Daia grinned. “The woodpeckers live in families and build a pantry of acorns in a tree. That steady THWACK sound is their work. They make holes to fit acorns so snugly that only they can remove them.”

“As acorns shrink, the birds move them to smaller holes—loose acorns get stolen by squirrels and jays,” added Dave.





“And the ghost shadow?” asked Fica

“Morning sun casting the tree’s shadow. By noon, it disappears.”

Dave chuckled

“But why did the birds attack us?” asked Feid.

“They were not attacking you.” Daia said. “They were mobbing you —making a fuss to chase threats from their pantry. You kept stomping near their groceries. The woodpeckers defend, jays warn, squirrels scold. All that swooping says ‘Back off, please!’”

“When you go off-trail, pick flowers, carve bark, and drop trash,”

Dave added, “you’re not just breaking rules. You’re breaking the forest’s plan. Flowers feed bees, insects, and birds. Bark is the tree’s skin that protects it. Trails keep feet away from nests, pantries like this, and insects. Wrappers blow and tangle and harm animals. Your ‘coolness’ turns their quiet morning into a giant alarm.”

Fica and Feid stared at the pantry tree, the working woodpeckers, the lookout jays, the bouncing squirrels. The morning sun lit every acorn like a gem. The THWACKS didn’t sound cursed anymore—they sounded like life doing what it’s supposed to do.

“We made it scary,” Fica said softly.

“By being messy,” Feid added.

They didn't speak another word until it was time for the evening campfire. "Today we're going to tell you the story of a spooky forest," Fica started.

Expecting yet another annoying horror story, the younger campers sat helpless. But to their surprise, the twins narrated the most fascinating tale of woodpeckers storing acorns that also benefits squirrels, jays, and other forest creatures and the younger kids leaned in, captivated.

The next morning brought more surprises. The twins stayed on trail, picked up every wrapper they'd dropped, and became excellent nature guides for the younger campers, showing them the granary tree and explaining why the forest's rules actually mattered.

By summer's end, everyone agreed: Fica and Feid weren't Horri-Fica and Horri-Feid anymore. They'd learned that the spookiest thing in the forest is being unkind to it, and the bravest thing is being its friend and protector.



FUN FACTS



Stone pine tree being used as a granary tree in Stevens Creek County Park, California

GRANARY TREE

A granary tree is a huge tree trunk with hundreds, or even thousands, of little holes all over it, each one perfectly sized for a single acorn!



Image: Chikubara team
Location: Stevens Creek County Park, California

Some granary trees have been used by acorn woodpeckers for hundreds of years, becoming ancient family heirlooms overflowing with snacks.



Acorn woodpecker at work

ACORNS

Acorns are produced by oak trees and are a favorite food for birds, animals, insects, and rodents.

Native Californians made acorn flour and used it to make bread and porridge.

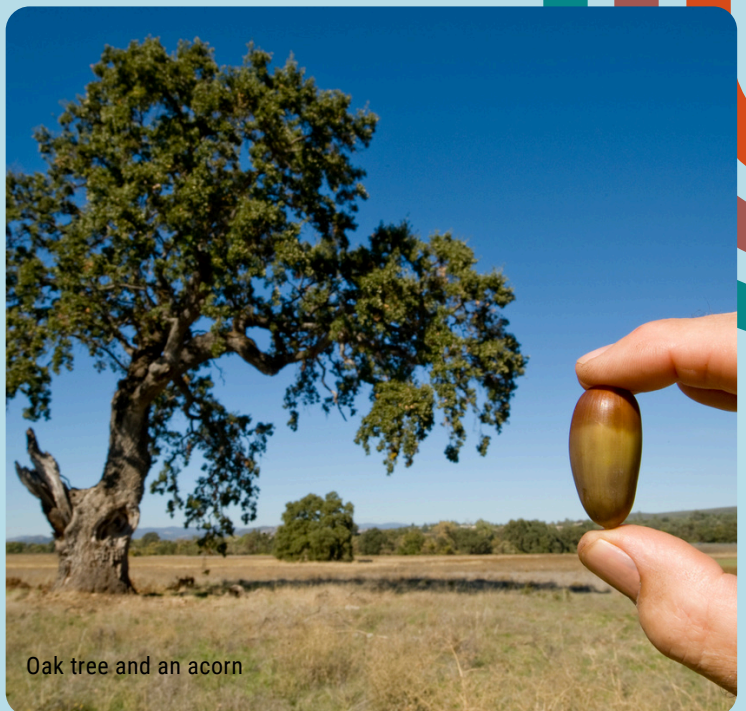
There are over 600 different species of oak trees, each producing acorns of different sizes, colors, shapes, and hats.



Deer eating acorns from an oak tree



Acorns



Oak tree and an acorn



to: hello@thedancingchef.me

Mahika writes:



I loved Chikubara's June 2025 edition. The story - The Secret Gardener was amazing, even though it had a lot of words. Reading so many words gets boring. But I like it more after pausing a while, then reading again.

I love the name Chikubara too. It is very cute. Every time I read the book, I think of my younger cousin.

Chikus' reply:

Dear Mahika, it is so sweet of you to think about your cousin when you read Chikubara. As for the long stories, we are also learning to write them in as few words as possible. However, there are so many things to share that we end up writing 1200 to 1500 words.



to: hello@thedancingchef.me

Sourish writes:



Pooper's story in August Chikubara is a very funny story but a clever way to teach children to eat fruits and vegetables every day to stay healthy. Seasons and produce across the globe is very informative. The recipe of the rainbow skewer looks delicious, I am going to try it soon.

I can't wait for the next issue.

Chikus' reply:

Dear Sourish, We love to hear from readers like you. We can't wait to see you try our recipes and hear how they turn out. Do send us a picture of your dish so that we can share it with our readers in the upcoming issues of Chikubara.

ACROSS THE GLOBE

OCTOBER

season and produce



PUMPKINS

California

Fall, or autumn, begins and citrus fruits, persimmons, and pumpkins are in season.



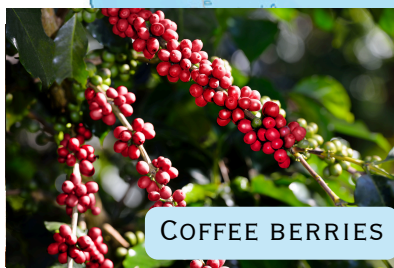
PERSIMMONS



SQUASH

New York

Fall is cold and colorful with pumpkins, squash, grapes, pears, potatoes, and cabbages.



COFFEE BERRIES



SOY

Brazil

Spring brings rain and papayas, passion fruit, pineapples, coffee, soy, bananas, and more.



ASPARAGUS

SOUR FIG

South Africa

Spring brings berries, peaches, plums, and asparagus.

ANTARCTICA

Map source: Guideoftheworld.com

Temperature still below freezing, any fresh produce is from hydroponic greenhouses at research stations or imported supplies.



BRUSSEL
SPROUTS



LEEEKS

Netherlands

Cool, damp, and foggy weather with leeks, Brussels sprouts, carrots, and onions in season.

BEET



WILD MUSHROOMS

Lake Baikal, Russia

Cold weather begins. Potatoes, carrots, beets, onions, and wild mushrooms are harvested.

Japan



CHESTNUTS

Fall begins and Daikon Radish, Taro Root, Mushrooms (shiitake, maitake) and chestnuts are in season.

Indonesia

Tropical climate. Heavy rain. Durian, mangosteens, rambutans, chillies in season.



DURIAN

Mumbai, India

Monsoon ends. Guava, beans, greens, chillies, rice are harvested.



RICE



GUAVA

Egypt

Hot days with tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, figs, melons, mangoes, dates, and corn in abundance.



DATES



ROCKET

Sydney, Australia

Spring brings peas, broad beans, artichokes, lettuce, rocket in abundance.



PEAS

Spring Onions



without Soil

1

Cut some spring onions with the roots intact



2

Place the cuttings in a small glass with just enough water to cover the roots



3

Change water every two days



4

Watch it grow



5

Cut the green parts to use in your recipes and keep the whites in the glass to regrow.



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

MAKE YOUR OWN

HOMEMADE YOGURT

"Yogurt is a dairy product made by fermenting milk with a specific culture of live bacteria."

1 Warm milk and yogurt

Add 1 cup of warm milk and 1 tbsp of yogurt in a bowl.

Make sure the yogurt you use has live active bacteria, also known as starter culture, in it.



2 Stir and set

Mix well and let it set for 6 - 8 hours in a dark and warm place.

If you live in colder climates then place the yogurt milk mixture in an oven with light on or in an instant pot on yogurt mode.



3 Enjoy

Eat fresh yogurt as is, with fruits, or with rice.

Once the yogurt 'sets' - thickens, keep it in a fridge else it will become more sour with time

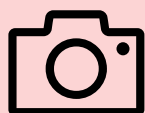


Milk too cold: bacteria not active
Milk too hot: bacteria will die
Milk will stay milk, no yogurt

Add fruit puree to make naturally colorful yogurt



Add fruits to make fruit yogurt



Send a picture to:
hello@thedancingchef.me



What are the ingredients of store bought yogurt?

RUNNY NOSE

What is happening in your body?



What is a runny nose?

It means that liquid (snot or mucus) is dripping or flowing out of the nose.

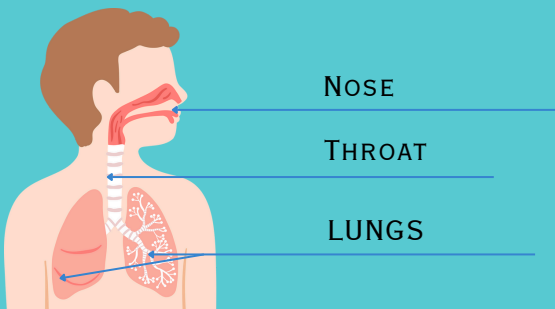
Instead of the usual small amount of snot that stays inside your nose, your body starts producing a lot more, and it becomes thinner and more watery, causing it to run out.

Who can get a runny nose?

Everyone.. babies, children, adults, and even animals and birds can get runny nose.

Inside your healthy body

Mucus, a slimy substance, is present all over your insides including your nose, throat, and lungs.



Mucus has some important jobs in our body:

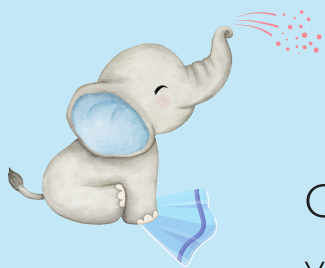
- 1 Mucus filters the air we breathe by trapping dust, germs, etc. preventing them from harming our body.
- 2 It moisturizes the delicate skin inside our body and prevents it from getting dry, cracked, and irritated.
- 3 It has immune cells that fight germs. Thickening and color changes of mucus can indicate infection as the immune cells fight it.

Why we get a runny nose?

Fighting Germs (Cold): When germs get in, the body's security system works extra hard to protect you. It makes more watery mucus to trap and wash the germs right out of your nose.

Allergies / Irritants: Sometimes your body gets confused and thinks pollen or pet hair are germs. It then produces more watery mucus.

Dry air: Heaters and air-conditioners make air dry. When air is super dry your nose has to work extra hard to preserve the body's moisture. It does this by making more mucus.



Keep colds away

Common cold is a sickness while a runny nose is a sign that your body is fixing something inside it.

How to keep colds away

Some of the basics to stay healthy and keep colds away are



Get enough sleep

Sleep strengthens your body's immune system



Drink enough water

6-8 glasses a day



Eat well

3 healthy meals a day



Outdoor play

Better if it's with friends



Practice good hygiene

Wash hands, shower, and wear clean clothes

Common cold vs runny nose

Common cold is a sickness caused by viruses infecting the nose and throat. Our body's immune system puts up a fight, and can cause symptoms like a runny or stuffy nose (where your body makes extra mucus to trap and wash out the germs), sneezing, coughing, and a sore throat.

Runny nose is not a sickness but a sign that something (dust, pollen, germs, cold or weather) is irritating your nose and the body is trying to fix it with extra mucus.



Have you noticed?

When you catch a cold your energy level goes down, making you tired, whereas if you have just a runny nose you can be active all day!

Did you know?

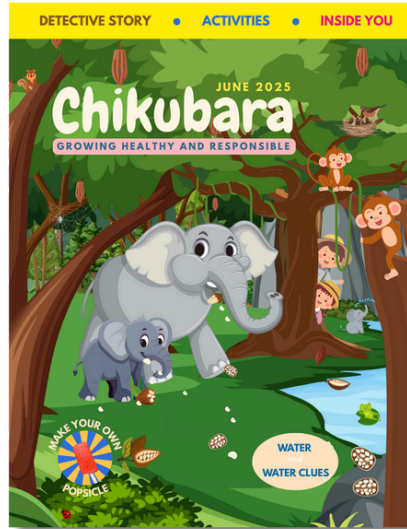
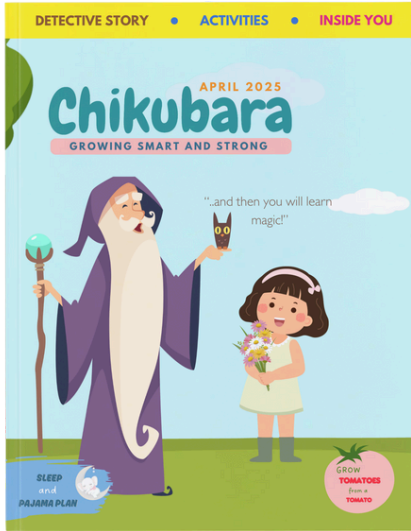
You can also get a runny nose for a few minutes when you eat hot/spicy food because a chemical called capsaicin in the food irritates your nose.

When you cry intensely, tears can drain from your eyes into your nasal passages, mixing with mucus and causing your nose to run.

You can cut this page and put it on a wall to help you and others stay healthy



Check out other issues



FIND YOUR MIX



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SCAN



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