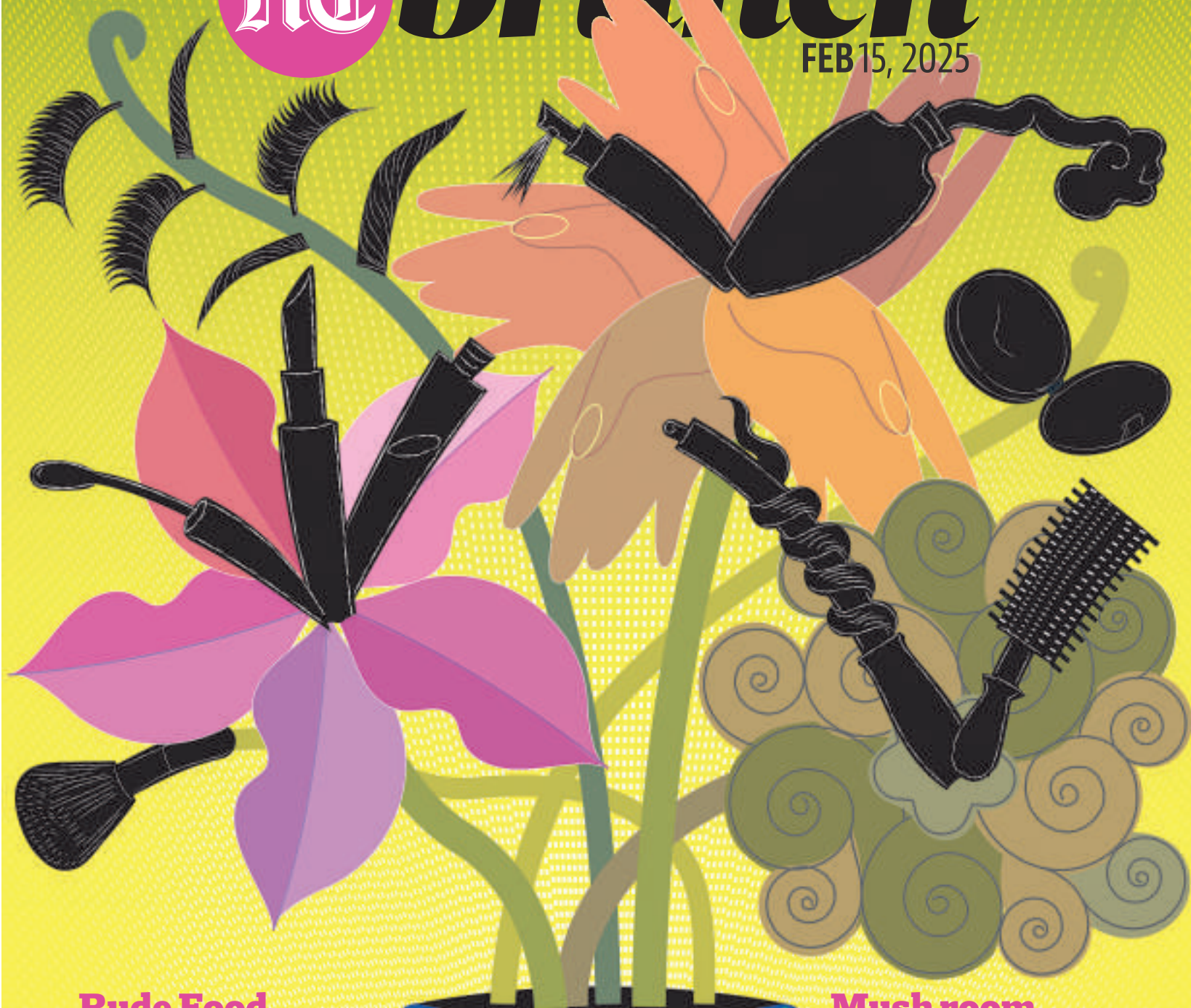




RELAX. THE WEEKEND'S HERE

# brunch

FEB 15, 2025



## Rude Food

Why the world  
loves milk again

## Mush room

David Nicholls talks  
love and other drugs

## Pick a side

Our bumper list of beauty dupes has makeup,  
hairstyle and skincare. Find your new OGs in here!

Free weekend e-magazine of the Hindustan Times

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# This week, we're...

## Team Brunch

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**Going on a speed hate.** Why speed date when you can speed hate? Mumbai-based events company 3 Art House helped anti-romance supporters flip the script on Valentine's Day. Paying participants gathered to gripe about exes, dating apps, annoyingly mushy couples, and relationship fails. Sit this one out, Cupid. We're busy.

**At boiling point.** Haters are criticising Mrs. (the Zee5 film based on The Great Indian Kitchen) for being too shrill. That the story has to be retold, louder, is the point. Why weren't we listening before?



**Taking that.** Quietly, a biopic about Robbie Williams got released late last year. No, they didn't call it Let Me

Entertain You. They went with Better Man, and got a CGI chimp to play Williams. Why? Because the singer (who named his



1999 album The Ego Has Landed) believes he's less evolved than other people. Critical success. Commercial dud. Viewers are... lovin' angels instead.

**Live! From New Yawrk!** It's 50 years of Saturday Night Live this week. Gosh, Lorne. Where did the time go? The sketch comedy show has given us Mom jeans (thanks, Tina Fey); Lonely Island hits such as Motherlover; and killer impersonations of Justin Bieber, Sarah Palin, Trump and more. We'll happily watch for another 50 years, if America upholds free speech.



SHUTTERSTOCK

**In our feud era.** Serena Williams danced to Kendrick Lamar's Not Like Us at the Super Bowl halftime show - a rap song that's actually a Drake diss track. Imagine Drake seeing his onetime crush vibing to a song that calls him out. Ouch! Meanwhile, Karla Sofía Gascón has been publicly shading Selena Gomez. What a time to be alive!



### Can't stop looking.

At Paris Couture Week '25, Gaurav Gupta unveiled a collection inspired by his life partner Navkirat Sodhi's near-fatal burn accident. Sodhi walked out in a white dress that revealed her scars. The designs had metal breastplates that looked like they were on fire, and a Twin Flame gown that symbolises their connection. Katniss who?



**Drawing it out.** For years, we blatantly disregarded Uno rules and stacked Draw 2 and Draw 4 cards while playing. Uno fought it, but caved. Their Indian version, Show 'Em No Mercy, has a ruthless Skip Everyone card: You can take another turn while your friends stare in helpless despair. And if you hoard more than 25 cards now, you're out. Let's play!

### Tracking the change.

London-based insurance agency Samphire Risk already insured celebrities and top execs against extortion, kidnap, hostage crises, terrorism and travel to dangerous countries. Now, it will also insure against being cancelled. Drunk tweets? They have a 24/7 hotline to minimise damage. Sus retweets? They offer 60-day clean-up against negative publicity. Keep an eye on who's signing up. They've probably done something stupid already. 🌸



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# Wait. Have we met before?

**When OG holiday hotspots get too crowded, switch to a destination dupe. These places offer a similar vibe, and are often cheaper too**

**Riddhi Doshi**

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Helsinki is less crowded than Copenhagen and has Insta-worthy cathedrals (above). The coral reefs in Belize are less stressed than those in Australia. PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK



Season 3 of *The White Lotus* drops tomorrow. Everyone's already flocking to Koh Samui, Thailand, where it is set, to play out their own vacay dreams. It means that hotel rates will be through the roof, the sights will be even more crowded, and the idyll you expected will be nowhere in sight.

South-East Asia has plenty of beach destinations that make for chill alternatives. But what about destination dupes for other overrun holiday hotspots? We asked in-the-know travel editors and writers Joanna Lobo, Kiran Mehta, Salil Deshpande and Sudipta Basu on which locations they'd switch out and why. "Each place has its own culture, customs, history and vibe," admits Mehta. "As long as you're realistic about the similarities and differences, a dupe works."

## Swap Copenhagen for Helsinki

Both cities are charming, but Helsinki is cheaper, smaller, less crowded. It also has great museums, historical monuments and Nordic cuisine with an emphasis on fresh, local produce (and a healthy obsession with fresh herring). "Unlike India, where the best stuff is exported, in Helsinki they actually eat the best stuff," says Lobo.

Also, while Copenhagen is fast paced, Helsinki gets people to slow down. It's walkable and has great public transport. Plus, it was named the world's most sustainable travel destination in 2024 by the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index. And the thrift stores have not yet been picked clean by bargain hunters. "It's a worthy ➔



Philadelphia is easier to navigate than NYC if you like history and art. Tohoku (inset) is home to ancient temples, much like Kyoto. Nusa Lembongan (below) is smaller and not as touristy as Bali.



dupe,” Lobo says.

### Swap NYC for Philadelphia

Thinner crowds, fewer scammers, lower prices, a thriving art scene, an impressive skyline and a solid dose of American history. Basu recommends Philadelphia as the first stop for someone flying into the US too – flights land on time and the immigration check is quicker. While NYC has the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, Philadelphia has the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall and the Museum of the American Revolution. It also has some of the best street art in the world, in addition to the Museum of Art and the Barnes Foundation. And while New Yorkers catcall and pickpocket, Philly has open streets, a clear grid plan and safer neighbourhoods.

### Swap the Great Barrier Reef for the Belize Barrier Reef

The Australian natural treasure has been over exploited by tourism. Its fragile ecology is under threat from the climate emergency. Mehta recommends going to Belize, in Central America, to snorkel instead. Belize is said to have healthier coral reefs and diverse marine life, including nurse sharks. Just try not to disturb any threatened or endemic habitats.

### Swap Bali for Nusa Lembongan

A 45-minute ferry ride from Bali lies one of Indonesia’s smallest and least touristy islands. You can easily walk to the coastline and see the sights and find great spots almost everywhere. “It’s where I had the best food in Indonesia,” says Lobo, referring to the local dishes and the local respect for ➔





**TREAD LIGHTLY**

Be as wary of dupes as you would be of the original locations, says Deshpande. Smaller, quieter destinations often can't handle a burst of viral fame and crumble under an onslaught of demanding visitors. "We are then back to the same conversation, looking for a dupe for a dupe."

It's easier, then, to stay with your original pick but go off-season. Europe in winter or autumn, Japan just before or after cherry blossom season. Everything's cheaper, relaxed and fun – what a vacation should be.

dietary restrictions. There are water activities such as surfing, snorkelling and scuba diving as well. Oh, and gorgeous beaches for all those photos.

**Swap Kyoto for Tohoku**

Tohoku, a three-hour train ride from Tokyo, is quiet and home to ancient temples, but not the constant stream of geisha-mad tourists. It also has a great season of cherry blossoms, so bloom chasers tend to go to Hirosaki Park, instead of Kyoto's crowded Arashiyama. There are also quiet hot springs, good skiing resorts and Zen gardens, says Basu.

**Swap Alaska for Tasmania**

The island state in Australia is where to catch the Southern Lights, if you can't make it to the US or Nordic nations for the Northern Lights, says Mehta. Tasmania has low levels of air pollution, so the skies are clear. In-the-know enthusiasts who visit often say the lights often appear brighter. Visas are relatively easier to obtain too.



Tasmania is not only pretty, it's where stargazers head to catch the Southern Lights.

**Swap London for Oxfordshire**

OK OK, it's not exactly the big city. But it's certainly easier to have a good time without constantly rushing or looking over your shoulder. Stunning museums and churches, a beautiful countryside, tiny villages, open pasture and hardly any people. Rudyard Kipling, Lewis Carroll and JRR Tolkien would drop in here. Some parts of the Harry Potter movies were shot here. Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton went on dates at Turf Tavern. "The bar scene here has a better vibe than in London," says Lobo. It's a university town, so it's home to great libraries and bookstores as well. 🍷

# Keeping the romance alive

**No heart feelings. David Nicholls says that all love stories are actually about loneliness. One Day gave us hope. His new novel, You Are Here, gives us more**

**Kanika Sharma**

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David Nicholls's six novels are intimate looks at falling and staying in love.



Reading David Nicholls's books is like being in the most intense relationship. It is love at first sight; you'll full-on crush over every flawed character, every fated meet-cute. You'll die a little inside with every twist. You'll replay scenes in your head long after the closing chapter.

Nicholls's *One Day* – that epic tale of hook-ups, false starts, detours, love and loss – was adapted into a Netflix series last year, leaving old and new fans ugly-crying at their screens. *You Are Here*, his latest, follows two middle-aged individuals finding each other (and themselves) on a walking trail in Northern England after their self-imposed isolation in the pandemic. No heartstring is left untugged, as usual. We wanted to know how he weaves in attraction and destruction, friendship and loneliness in equal measure.

So, we cornered him at this edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival, and asked him.

**All six of your novels are about love, but no two are alike. What draws you to the topic, over and over?**

Falling in love is the central event of your life, isn't it? Why wouldn't a writer engage with that and explore it fully? *One Day* (2009) and *You Are Here* (2024) are love stories. But *Us* (2014) is very much about the end of a relationship. *Sweet Sorrow* (2019) is as much about growing up as it is about falling in love.

Love really seems bottomless in its potential. It makes us ridiculous, say foolish things, get caught up in terrible traps. As a teenager, I liked to read books that evoked a big emotional response; and ➔



LOVE REALLY SEEMS BOTTOMLESS IN ITS POTENTIAL. IT MAKES US RIDICULOUS, SAY FOOLISH THINGS, GET CAUGHT UP IN TERRIBLE TRAPS

that's something I've tried to emulate. In many ways, the books are much more about friendship than they are about romantic love. Even *One Day*, which is an epic, sweeping love story for most of its running length, is about the joy and pain of friendship.

### **You Are Here is the most awkward of love stories, though...**

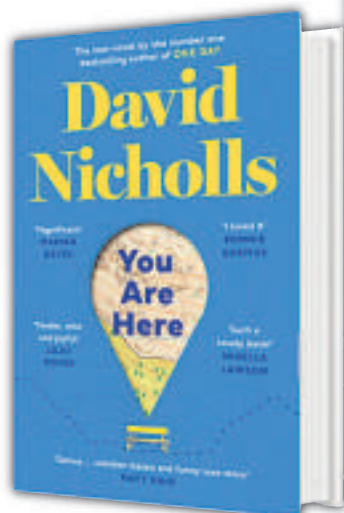
If there's a second theme in all the books after falling in love, it's probably loneliness. Often, solitude is a kind of freedom. The ability to control your life and not answer to anyone is wonderful. The whole business of presenting yourself to another human being as a romantic prospect seems to me so stressful and comical. Loneliness was something I became very aware of during the pandemic as I saw friends who weren't in relationships, struggling with solitude. It became a starting point for the book.

### **Have readers approached you to play agony aunt in their own dramas?**

Oh yes. People often say, 'I'm in love with this guy. He's a bit like Dexter from *One Day*. What do I do?' I have to politely withdraw, because, you know, I have no wisdom. I sit around and think about love all day, but that doesn't mean I have any answers.

### **How come there's so much love but no happily ever afters in your books?**

They seem eccentric and forced to me. I don't know what 'happily ever after' means. Does it mean there are no more arguments, breakups, or infidelities? My endings are more straightforward, sad, tragic, or ambiguous. 🍷



# Turn on the switch

**Make space on your beauty counter! Here's our expert-approved list of the best makeup, skincare and haircare dupes in the business**

**Shraddha Chowdhury**

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Sorry, Charlotte Tilbury. Her beauty brand makes probably the most iconic lipstick of our generation. Pillow Talk is a soft nude pink. It's luminous. It's what Alia Bhatt wore on her wedding day. Gwyneth Paltrow, Naomi Campbell and Jennifer Lopez have worn it. It's also the most copied or "duped" lipstick shade of our time.

And Tilbury is pissed off. "When you dupe, you dupe the consumer," she said at the opening of her London store in January. For beauty lovers, a dupe lipstick, blush, cream or serum from another brand is part of the game.

We drafted celebrity makeup artist Namrata Soni, dermatologists Dr Jaishree Sharad and Dr Geetika Mittal Gupta, and digital creators Ayesha Sanghi, Aashi Adani, Namrata Pathania and Aishwarya Kandpal to build our guide. Enjoy!







The e.l.f Cosmetics Camo Liquid Blush (above) is a good substitute for the Rare Beauty Soft Pinch blush, says digital creator Ayesha Sanghi. If the NARS Orgasm Blush is too pricey for you, swap it for the Milani Baked Blush in 'Luminoso' instead. (below)



## Makeup

**The OG:** Urban Decay 24/7 Eyeshadow Mono Moondust in 'Space Cowboy' (₹2,500)

**The dupe:** ColourPop Super Shock Shadow in 'Ritz' (₹749)

"It's the same wet, sparkly look for a fraction of the price!" — Sanghi

**The OG:** Rare Beauty Soft Pinch Liquid Blush (₹3,200)

**The dupe:** e.l.f. Cosmetics Camo Liquid Blush (₹ 766)

"Insane pigment from just a tiny amount, easy to blend, a great range of shades." — Sanghi

**The OG:** Milk Makeup Cooling Water Jelly Tint (₹3,200)

**The dupe:** Type Beauty Hydra Jelly Tints (₹799)

"The Indian brand has added skincare benefits.

It also has a sparkly shimmer version." —

Sanghi

**The OG:** Benefit Cosmetics Gimme Brow + Volumizing Eyebrow Gel (₹1,650)

**The dupe:** NYX Professional Makeup Thick It Stick It Brow Mascara (₹899) & Maybelline New York Tattoo Brow 3-Day Gel (₹699)

Recommended by Soni

**The OG:** Charlotte Tilbury Pillow Talk Lipstick (₹3,450)

**The dupe:** L'Oréal Paris Color Riche Intense Volume Matte Lipstick in 'Worth It' (₹999) & Maybelline Color Sensational Creamy Matte Lipstick in 'Touch of Spice' (₹329)

"L'Oréal has a satin finish, while Maybelline provides a creamy matte finish." — Pathania







Makeup Revolution's Ultimate Nudes Shadow Palette (above) is perfect for festive occasions, says digital creator Aashi Adani. L'Oréal Paris's Color Riche matte lipstick, 'Worth It', is as good as the Charlotte Tilbury version.



**The OG:** Fwee Lip&Cheek Blurry Pudding Pot (₹1,750)

**The dupe:** Diam Beauty Soft Filter Blurring Pot (₹899)

"The same squishy, blurring formula of the Korean one, but for Indian skin tones." — Sanghi

**The OG:** NARS Orgasm Blush (₹3,400)

**The dupe:** Milani Baked Blush in 'Luminoso' (Rs 1,650)

"Both provide a peachy-pink hue, with subtle shimmer for a natural, radiant look." — Pathania

**The OG:** Huda Beauty Obsessions Palette (₹2,650)

**The dupe:** Makeup Revolution Ultimate Nudes Shadow Palette (₹850)

"Affordable, excellent pigmentation and come in versatile shade options. It's a must-have for festive and wedding looks." — Adani

**The OG:** Too Faced Better Than Sex Mascara (₹2,650)

**The dupe:** Maybelline Lash Sensational Sky High Mascara (₹799)

Recommended by Soni

**The OG:** Fenty Beauty Killawatt Highlighter (₹4,000)

**The dupe:** SimplyNam Pixie Dust Multi-Use Glitter Glow (₹899)

Recommended by Soni

**The OG:** Tarte Sculpt Tape Contour (₹4,000)

**The dupe:** e.l.f. Cosmetics Halo Glow Contour Beauty Wand in 'Medium and Tan' (₹1,150)

Recommended by Soni







The Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel (above) has the same lightweight texture as Clinique's Moisture Surge hydrator. Indulgeo Essentials's sheet mask is an Indian version of Biodance's bio-collagen masks.



## Skincare

**The OG:** Clinique Moisture Surge 100H Auto-replenishing Hydrator (Rs 3,550)

**The dupe:** Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel (Rs 1,150)

"Both have a lightweight, gel-based texture that's ideal for oily to combination skin." — Pathania

**The OG:** Kosas DreamBeam Mineral Sunscreen (Rs 3,462)

**The dupe:** Dot & Key Strawberry Dew Tinted Sunscreen (Rs 549)

"It's a weightless, runny, tinted sunscreen with more shades that suit Indian skin tones." — Sanghi

**The OG:** Tower 28 Hypochlorous Acid (Rs 4,150)

**The dupe:** The Derma Co. Hypochlorous Anti-Acne Hydrating Spray (Rs 399) or Minimalist HOCL Skin Relief Spray (Rs 399)

"Derma Co.'s formula aims to deliver gentle, soothing antiseptic action and skin support." — Dr Sharad

"Minimalist has a simple and similar three-ingredient formula." — Sanghi

**The OG:** Biodance Bio-Collagen Real Deep Mask (Rs 6,800)

**The dupe:** Indulgeo Essentials Bio-Collagen Intense Glow Hydrating Overnight Sheet Mask (Rs 1,980)

"Biodance products are difficult to find in India. This is a great local alternative." — Sanghi

**The OG:** L'Occitane Almond Oil Shower Gel (Rs 2,400)

**The dupe:** Biotique Almond Oil Ultra Rich Body ➔





Dermatologist Dr Jaishree Sharad recommends L'Oréal's night cream mask as an alternative for Estée Lauder's night repair serum. Dr.G's B3 niacinamide face serum (below) and Plum BodyLovin's Vanilla Caramello body lotion (bottom) are cheaper versions of the originals.



Wash (₹220)

"The dupe is formulated with almond, neem and sunflower oils, combined with wild turmeric." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** Sol de Janeiro Brazilian Bum Bum Cream (₹4,800)

**The dupe:** Plum BodyLovin' Vanilla Caramello Body Lotion (₹475)

"Both have a rich texture and provide intense hydration with a similar warm vanilla and caramel scent." — Pathania

**The OG:** Estée Lauder Advanced Night Repair Serum (₹9,500)

**The dupe:** L'Oréal Revitalift Triple Action Night Cream-Mask (₹1,679)

"Intense anti-aging, hydration and smoothness at a lower cost." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** La Roche-Posay Retinol Vitamin B3 Serum (₹4,999)

**The dupe:** Skin by Dr.G B3 Niacinamide Face Serum (₹745)

"It's an all-in-one solution for hydration, brightening and anti-aging for Indian skin."

— Dr Gupta

**The OG:** The Ordinary Salicylic Acid 2% Masque (₹1,450)

**The dupe:** The Derma Co. 2% Salicylic Acid Mask (₹499)

"Both are gentle exfoliators that dissolve blackheads and whiteheads." — Dr Gupta

**The OG:** La Roche-Posay Cicaplast Balm B5 (Rs 3,000)

**The dupe:** Brinton Atomist Skin Barrier Repair Cream (₹445)

"A good alternative for dry, itchy and irritated skin." — Dr Sharad







Nyveda's Hair Growth Treatment Oil, Revive My Roots, has real herbs and is more affordable than Fable & Mane's Holiroots Treatment Oil. Livon's Heat Protect Serum (below) costs just a fraction of the price of Schwarzkopf's hair spray.



## Haircare

**The OG:** Dyson Airwrap (Rs 49,900)

**The dupe:** Protouch Airshot (Rs 20,000)

"The same airflow tech at less than half the price."

— Sanghi

**The OG:** Fable & Mane Holiroots Treatment Oil (Rs 3,550)

**The dupe:** Nyveda Hair Growth Treatment Oil Revive My Roots (Rs 949)

"The Nyveda one has real herbs in the bottle, so their properties continue to be infused into the oil. It's also available in a much larger quantity at a more affordable price." — Sanghi

**The OG:** Kérastase Elixir Ultime Oil-in-Serum (Rs 5,900)

**The dupe:** L'Oréal Paris Extraordinary Oil Serum (Rs 649)

"Both contain argan and sunflower oils, offering hydration, frizz control and shine." — Pathania

**The OG:** MoroccanOil Hydrating Conditioner (Rs 2,340)

**The dupe:** Anaboom Anti-Hair Fall Serum (Rs 1,399)

"Anaboom is medicated so it reduces hairfall as it hydrates." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** MoroccanOil Intense Hydrating Mask (Rs 3,240)

**The dupe:** Plum Olive & Macadamia Mega Moisturising Hair Mask (Rs 675)

"Plum's mask is designed to do exactly what MoroccanOil's hydrating mask does, at less than half the cost." — Adani

**The OG:** Schwarzkopf Professional OSiS+ Super Shield Hair Spray (Rs 1,900)

**The dupe:** Livon Heat Protect Serum (Rs 315)

"It shields hair from heat damage and adds smoothness." — Dr Sharad







Ouai's Scalp Serum costs ₹6,100, but its counterpart, Trigaïne Caffeine Shampoo, is available for just ₹350. Brinton WellGrow's Gold hair serum, Selsun's anti-dandruff shampoo and TRESemmé's hair serum are all good dupes.



**The OG:** Olaplex No. 7 Bonding Oil (₹3,250)

**The dupe:** TRESemmé Keratin Repair Bond Plex Oil Hair Serum (₹499)

"Both provide a frizz-free, smooth finish without weighing the hair down." — Pathania

**The OG:** Kérastase Genesis Hydra-Fortifiant Shampoo (₹2,800)

**The dupe:** Selsun Daily Anti-Dandruff Shampoo (₹500)

"It controls excess oil production and strengthens hair with selenium sulfide." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** OUAI Scalp Serum (₹6,100)

**The dupe:** Trigaïne Caffeine Shampoo (₹350)

"Caffeine that helps stimulate the scalp and supports hair growth." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** Shiseido Fino Hair Mask (₹1,280 - 1,989)

**The dupe:** Matrix Biolage Deep Smoothing Masque (₹315)

"Both deliver intense nourishment, hydration and frizz control." — Pathania

**The OG:** Wavytalk Thermal Brush (₹8,891)

**The dupe:** Alan Truman Digital Volumo Hair Volumising, Curling & Waving Brush (₹3,999)

"The perfect tool for an instant blowout." — Sanghi

**The OG:** The Ordinary Multi-Peptide Serum for Hair Density (₹2,150)

**The dupe:** Brinton WellGrow Gold Hair Serum (₹1,700)

"Great to combat hair thinning." — Dr Sharad

**The OG:** L'Oréal Elvive 8 Second Wonder Water Hair Transforming Lamellar Rinse-out (₹6,177)

**The dupe:** BBlunt Intense Moisture Lamellar Treatment Water (₹999)

"It's made by an Indian brand, gives hair an incredible shine and is locally available." — Sanghi

\*All prices are at MRP for comparable quantities, with additional import charges where applicable. 🌸



# Give milk a kiss and a curdle



VIR  
SANGHVI

**The world is now realising what India has long known: Milk is healthy, boiling kills germs, cheese is safe. Forget fanatics and fads. Just listen to your body and palate**

All over the world, nutritionists and food companies are coming to a conclusion that you and I might find a little surprising: Milk is great!

Milk sales are up and those of its imitators or substitutes are either stagnant or falling.

The reason that we, in India, might find this surprising is because we already knew this. We have never fallen out of love with milk. We still associate it with good health, nutrition and versatility.

Without milk, there would be no dahi and that would cause a crisis in much of south India. There would also be no lassi, which would disappoint Punjabis almost as much as the non-availability of paneer. In Bengal, mishti, would vanish because most Bengali sweets are based on milk.

Milk has gone through a bad phase in the West, specifically in America. More than a decade ago, the US government's nutritional advice gave milk a bad rap. You could drink it only in small quantities, the government suggested, because dairy fat was bad for you and raised your cholesterol levels.

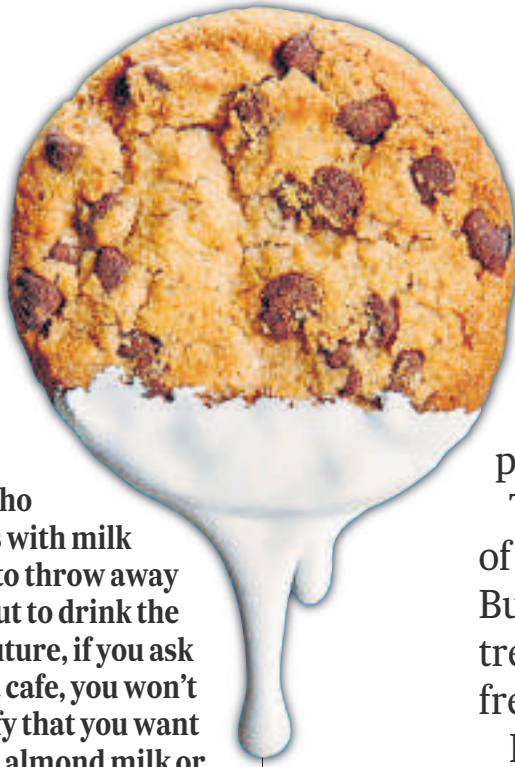
There was also a growing focus on lactose intolerance. Not only did sales of milk collapse in America, but a number of so-called milk substitutes hit the market: Soy milk, oat milk, almond milk, etc.

That phase has finally ended. The new villains are carbohydrates. Americans who were planning to enjoy a glass of milk with cookies have now been told to throw away the cookies but to drink the milk. ➔



All that stuff about dairy fat being bad and raising cholesterol levels has been dialled down. The new villains are carbohydrates.

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



Americans who enjoy cookies with milk are now told to throw away the cookies but to drink the milk. In the future, if you ask for a latte at a cafe, you won't have to specify that you want real milk, not almond milk or a non-dairy substitute.

Milk has gained from the new scientific consensus that we should cut down on machine-made foods. And that spells doom for soy milk and the rest.

In fact, the pendulum has swung the other way. Robert F Kennedy Jr, Donald Trump's health secretary-designate, wants people to drink raw milk, that is, milk that has not been pasteurised.

This used to be a fringe idea, advocated by the sort of Americans who also believe that the Earth is flat. But Kennedy and his supporters have embraced it, treating raw milk as a symbol of naturalness and freedom from government regulation.

It is an idea that alarms public health experts and scientists, because raw milk, even milk that is freshly squeezed from a cow, can contain harmful viruses and bacteria.

In India, even the Lalu Prasads do not oppose pasteurisation or sterilisation. They know it can be dangerous to drink raw milk regularly.

Another reason that milk has made a comeback is that the lactose-intolerance orthodoxy, which had prevailed for decades, is now in trouble. Scientists have told us that most humans lose the ability to digest milk after puberty. It can lead to worrying symptoms: Indigestion, intestinal pain, gas, stomach bloating, fatigue, brain fog. Why is there no dairy tradition in China? Why does milk play such a small part in the diets of the Chinese and the Japanese? It is because of lactose intolerance.

The problem with this view is that each year, the evidence for it becomes scantier and scantier. Over the last two decades or so, the people of east Asia have begun to consume lots of milk and milk products with no ➔







Indians have never fallen out of love with milk. We still associate it with good health, nutrition and of course versatility. Without milk there would be no dahi, lassi, paneer, or mishti.



obvious detrimental health effects.

It is very hard for lay people to understand what is happening because we rely on scientists and they don't seem to be able to adequately explain why the global consensus on lactose intolerance may have depended on overstating its existence. But equally, you don't have to be a medical genius to figure out that RFK Jr is wrong. If milk contains germs, then it makes sense to boil it or to pasteurise it. That's what Indians have always done.

And perhaps the Indian experience could be the model for the world to follow. Until the middle of the 20th century, for example, we did not drink much tea. And when the Tea Board persuaded us to consume its products, it did so by encouraging us to drink tea with lots of milk. Cooked chai or masala chai, are both, effectively, variations on hot flavoured milk.

So, it's best to follow a middle path that suits your own body. Take my own example. Not only do I not like the taste of milk, it also causes me abdominal discomfort. But I love ice-cream, and even though it does involve a certain amount of suffering, I do not mind the occasional bout of discomfort in the pursuit of good food. And because Indian cuisine does not necessarily depend, like French, on dairy products, I have no difficulty eating pretty much what I want. (Like many people who have a problem with milk, I find that dahi does not cause discomfort.)

Far better, I think, to follow a sensible middle path than to lurch, as America has, from one extreme to another; from the demonisation of milk to RFK Jr's obsession with drinking it raw. 🌱

# No roses, just romance



SEEMA  
GOSWAMI

Valentine's Day has commercialised the idea of romance. In reality, it's all about showing you care for them. PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK

**Had enough of Valentine's Day clichés? How about honouring real love, every day, with a million little gestures that matter?**

Valentine's Day is behind us and it is safe to come out from hiding without being bombarded by offers to buy roses, send chocolates, make dinner reservations, book a mini-break, or propose marriage to your significant other. It has now become de rigueur to complain about the 'commercialisation' of Valentine's Day – and I do, in fact, complain about that – but what annoys me most about the V Day ad blitz is that I don't really recognise the version of 'romance' that is being sold to us. Not only is it needlessly performative, it also doesn't resemble anyone's lived reality.

So, what, you ask, do I consider to be romantic? What would make the cut if I were looking for romance in a relationship (and who isn't?). Well, here are just some gestures that epitomise 'romance' to me; and the best thing is that you don't need to wait for Valentine's Day to come around again to make these gestures for your better half.

**There is nothing more romantic** in my book than making a cup of coffee (or tea, or hell, even a martini) for your partner without being requested to do so. It could be first thing in the morning so that they wake up to the aroma of freshly roasted beans. It could be to greet them when they come home after a long day at work. But no matter what the time or occasion, there is nothing quite so lovely as







Surprise your partner as often as you can. Buy them croissants from their favourite bakery for Sunday breakfast. Make them a cup of coffee in the morning.



*The views expressed by the columnist are personal*

having your partner do something thoughtful for you (and this is crucial) without being asked.

**Spontaneous gestures of affection** don't get the importance that they deserve in most long-term relationships. Just stroking the back of your husband's neck as he works in the study; stopping to drop a kiss on your wife's head as she reads the morning newspapers; hugging your spouse goodbye and hello; every one of these gestures makes the recipient feel loved and cherished. Do them often enough and they will not just strengthen your bond but also deepen it in crucial ways.

**Surprise your partner as often as you can.** You can, of course, make the grand gesture and book a weekend getaway or even a music concert

without letting him/her get wind of the fact.

But even smaller surprises do the trick as long as you put some thought into them. Buy him croissants from his favourite bakery for Sunday breakfast. Gift her a subscription to a flower delivery service that will send fresh flowers every week.

**Most of us fall out of the habit** of telling our partners we love them every day. But even if we don't verbalise our love, there are plenty of ways in which we can express it in daily life without saying those three little words. Covering your partner with a blanket as she falls asleep on the couch watching TV. Giving him a shoulder rub as he finishes a long stint in front of the computer. Making his/her favourite food over the weekend, even if it needs hours and hours of prep. Or just holding his/her hand as you sit in the doctor's reception waiting for that tiresome yearly check-up. All of these gestures spell romance more than a bouquet of red roses ever could. 💜



# Waving the matic wand



HORMAZD  
SORABJEE

**Mercedes knows how to make a customer happy, both in the driver's seat and at the back. The new E 450 is all class, all power, all business — for an all-consuming price**

The Mercedes-Benz E-Class has long been the benchmark for luxury sedans, offering a blend of comfort, tech and driving dynamics. It's the best-selling car in its class, thanks largely to its long wheelbase, offering more legroom to the rear-seat passenger. Luxury cars are largely chauffeur-driven. So, owners get to stretch out as they travel.

Arch-rival BMW wised up to this hack and took the fight to Mercedes doorstep (or garage door) with its 5-series, offering a long wheelbase for the first time in India. Mercedes didn't cower. Its latest E-class offers all that and more: Three engine options against the 5-series's single petrol motor.

The base E 200 is ideal for those who are chauffeur-driven. For owners who crave more power, its engine may feel underwhelming. This is where the E 450 4MATIC raises the stakes. It has a formidable 381 hp—an impressive 177 hp more than the E 200. However, this boost in performance comes at a significant premium. At ₹92.5 lakh (ex-showroom), it's



The base E 200 is ideal for those who are purely chauffeur-driven. The E 450 4MATIC raises the stakes. It has a formidable 381 hp.







The Superscreen setup has a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster. The turbo-petrol engine goes from 0 to 100kph in a claimed time of 4.5 seconds. This is why fans love the new models of the E-Class.



*The views expressed by the columnist are personal*

₹14 lakh more than the base model. Yet, aside from the upgraded powertrain and all-wheel drive (4MATIC), the equipment levels remain essentially the same. It is worth the premium? Let's see.

Inside the cabin, there's no difference between the E 200 and E 450. Mercedes has set the standard for interior quality, and the cabin uses soft-touch plastics and brushed aluminium finishes.

The Superscreen setup is a tech highlight, featuring a 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, a 14.4-inch touchscreen infotainment system, and a 12.3-inch passenger touchscreen. There aren't too many hard buttons, and most functions are housed in the central touchscreen. Even regularly used functions, such as the aircon, call for a two-step operation. It's fair to say that Mercedes's MBUX system is the most user friendly in luxury cars.

At the heart of the E 450 lies a 3.0-litre inline-six turbo-petrol engine, producing a robust 381 hp and 500 Nm of torque. That's enough to rocket from 0 to 100 kph in a claimed time of 4.5 seconds. Those are figures in the realm of high-performance sports sedans. Floor the throttle and your head will be pressed back into the pillow-soft headrests. The nine-speed automatic transmission offers smooth shifts when driven sedately and a snappy response when you put your foot down.

The E 450 glides over road imperfections with remarkable composure. It absorbs bumps and potholes effortlessly, delivering the plush ride that E-Class buyers expect. Switching to Sport mode firms up the suspension and sharpens throttle response, which makes the E 450 surprisingly agile for its size. It strikes the perfect balance—chauffeured luxury on weekdays, driving pleasure on weekends. Pricy, but that's the price you pay for the best of both worlds. 🍷

# Give the bad guys a break

**Some were third-wheeling. Some were just doing their job. Hit replay. You'll find that these 10 villains aren't so bad after all**

**Christalle Fernandes**

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**1 Tom Kazansky aka Iceman:** Maverick's nemesis in *Top Gun* (1986) was cocky and confident. But compared to Maverick, he was the more bankable pilot. And yet, we hated on Iceman for trying to show our hero how it's done. He's not the obstacle in the story, Maverick's ego is. Thankfully, the 2022 sequel sets them up as allies.



**2 Gen Mitchell:** We didn't like Gen's manipulative behaviour in *To All The Boys I've Loved Before* (2018). But come on. She had reason to be insecure. She knew her

former childhood bestie, Lara Jean, always had the hots for her BF, Peter. Of course she'd feel threatened. Honestly, Kitty was the real villain for mailing Lara Jean's letters in revenge.







### 3 **James Norrington:**

The stuffy Commodore from *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) was trying to defend Port Royal from dangerous pirates. Just look at the movie from his POV. Why

wouldn't he try to capture a pirate and have him brought to justice. It's no crime to love the gorgeous Elizabeth Swann either. That's not a villain, just a man doing his job and seeking a wife.

### 4 **Trina Vega:**

Tori's older sister in *Victorious* (2010- 2013) was depicted as an annoying, self-centered diva. But she was into avocado face masks before it was cool, and she always believed in herself. And, of course, she gave us that iconic line: "I am SO upset!" No hate here, anymore.



### 5 **Karishma Solanki:**

The fiancée in *Hasee Toh Phasee* (2014) is posh, stylish, and commanding. She expected Sidharth Malhotra's character, Nikhil, to focus on his job and start a business. What's wrong with that? She could have been more supportive of her sister, Meeta (Parineeti Chopra). But hey, your fiancé says he loves your sister. On your wedding day. Who wouldn't turn into a villain?



### 6 **Miranda Hillard:**

Do not hate on the mom in *Mrs Doubtfire* (1993). She's the one with the job, the bills, the responsibilities and the rules because her husband is not mature enough to co-parent three kids. Watch the movie as a grown-up and Sally Field's character becomes the one to root for. She didn't need a fourth child in her life.



**7 Ken:** Not Barbie's boyfriend, but Vanessa's human BF from Bee Movie (2007). This is a strange story of a bee who sues humans for exploiting the insects for honey. Ken is the only saving grace. Why were we expected to hate him



**8 Sharpay Evans:** Perfect curls, glossy lips, iconic pink outfits. Sharpay from High School Musical (2006) was so Paris Hilton-coded. She wanted Troy to get a scholarship, but was seen as the bad girl for it. Also, she had a better voice and stage presence than Gabriella.



for judging her relationship with a bee? He was better off without a woman who falls for insects.

**9 Meghna Pariyar:**

Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na (2008) had one of the worst love triangles. Imagine being Meghna, dating a guy



who's hung up on his bestie. Their friends ship them. Even their parents ship them. Growing up, we judged her for her dysfunctional family and her inability to accept reality. But Meghna did no wrong. We hope she eventually found true love.

**10 Sid Phillips:** Sid's dark, goth-vibes room gave us nightmares when we watched Toy Story (1995) as kids. He was made out to be the opposite of goody-goody, wholesome Andy. But he was just a normal kid, messing around with his toys and being creative. We've all drawn on our Barbies and painted over our Hot Wheels. How was he to know that they were secretly alive? 🍷





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**HT**brunch

backstage

this is us

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**{ A LITTLE EXTRA }**

When HT's resident designer **Malay Karmakar** learnt that this week's Brunch cover was beauty-related, he knew he didn't want the usual visuals.

No smears of colour, no creams spilling over, no huddle of spoolies. "The aim was to be different," he says. "I went with flowers in a vase, but created with all the elements in the story: Lips, hair and hands. And all the coveted items in the beauty world: The false eyelash, the curling tong, the atomiser." He picked a warm palette to draw the eye in. It turned out to be a meta cover – a dupe floral

arrangement for an article about dupes. Not bad for a man who admits that the only beauty product he owns is soap. 🌸



# Jeong Ji-woo

**Influencer and entrepreneur,  
@MeJiwoo103)**

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## Currently, I am:

Thrilled with the response to the Kosmos Kindlife Festival! My gentle daily skincare brand, Neaf Neaf, launched there.

## On my speed dial:

My husband, family, employees, and friends. But I contact my husband and mom the most.

## Today I'm craving:

Acai bowls and Greek yogurt. They leave me feeling refreshed and are easy on the stomach.

## Next big splurge:

I'm planning to renovate and update my home. So, appliances and furniture.

## Last thing I ordered online:

Toothpaste and a toothbrush. Just the essentials.



## Favourite subject in school:

Art and drawing. It reflects in my work.

ADOBE STOCK

## Advice I'd give my 18-year-old self:

Adopt a "let's give it a try" attitude. Love yourself the most and trust your abilities.

## What Koreans can learn from Indian beauty:

I was particularly impressed by herbal cosmetics and hair care using argan oil.

## A secret skill I have:

I've learnt to change clothes quickly! How else will I manage a shooting schedule?

## A superpower I wish I had:

To control time. Life presents countless significant moments beyond just business. I'd meticulously review things I might have missed, and relive crucial moments.

## My favourite bad habit:

Scrolling late into the night. I end up sleeping less.

## My most star-struck moment so far:

My wedding in 2021. 