

INDIAN SWEETS

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to Indian Cuisine and food one thing cannot be overlooked...Our love for Sweets! Most Indians have a sweet tooth or a mouthful of them to say the least. It's not uncommon to see huge crowds at Sweet stores across the Country. And with the variety and sheer number of sweets available it's no wonder that it's such an important part of an Indian's lives. Sweets are part of any Indian celebration or festivity of any kind. They are prepared in Indian households not only for special feasts and occasions, but also for simple celebrations like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations or even any other concocted reason. Every event big or small, calls for the sharing sweets with the whole neighbourhood.

One can get a beautiful scene of colourful sweets in any indian sweet shop. Sweets are symbol of good gesture in india. Hence, sweets are first tasted when any new thing happens or if important decisions are taken. In most countries sweets are the last course of a meal. In India though they are served with the rest of the meal and in some traditions especially during celebrations, people start eating a meal only after having had a bite of the sweet on the plate, to signify the celebration. Indian sweets are known as 'Mithai'. They rely heavily on sugar, milk and condensed milk and frying, however the bases of the sweets vary by region. They more intense and sweeter than western sweets and desserts and quite a bit heavier since they're made mainly in Ghee which is clarified butter.

DETAILS OF SOME VERY COMMON INDIAN SWEETS:

Barfi - This is a popular indian sweet. Plain barfi is made using the basic ingredients of sugar and condensed milk until the concoction solidifies. Barfi can be divided into kaju barfi (cashew nut barfi), kesari pedha (saffron barfi), pista barfi (pistachio barfi), cham cham (pink and white barfi), doodh peda (kewra oil and pistachio), chocolate barfi , badam pak (almond barfi), walnut barfi and also gajar barfi (carrotbarfi). It is customary forbarfi to be covered with an edible metallic leaf known as "vark"

Balushahis are made of maida flour, and are deep-fried in clarified butter and then dipped in sugar syrup.

Badushahs are made from a stiff dough made with all purpose flour, ghee and a pinch of baking soda. One-inch-diameter (25 mm), 1/2-inch-thick (13 mm) discs are shaped with hands, fried in ghee or oil and dunked in thick sugar syrup so that there is a sugar coating. They are very sweet, but tasty with a slightly flaky texture.

Basundi - is an Indian dessert mostly in Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka. It is a sweetened dense milk made by boiling milk on low heat until the milk is reduced by half. Heavy cream may be added during the boiling process to hasten the thickening process. Once reduced, a little sugar, cardamom, Buchanania seeds also known as Charoli and/or saffron are added. Basundi is served chilled, often garnished with slices of almonds and pistachios.

Bebinca: The most famous Goa's sweetmeats is bebinca also known as bibik. There is a legend that says that Bebinca was made by a nun called Bibiona of the Convento da Santa Monica in Old Goa. She made it with seven layers to symbolise the seven hills of Lisbon and Old Goa and offered it to the priest. But, he found it too small and thus the layers were increased. There are some claims that it is made with 20 layers. But, ideally it is 14 or 16 layers. According to some culinary experts this is a modified version of bebingka made in Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia.

It is a wonderful concoction made from layer upon layer of coconut pancakes. The extract of coconut milk is added to flour, sugar, eggs and ghee and other delectable ingredients are used to make this delicacy. Each scrumptious layer has to be baked before the next one is added, traditionally it has 16 layers but can be made with less or more. The dessert is baked in a specially-made clay oven, with hot coal as a source of heat, placed above. Though the process of making bebinca is tedious process the dessert is a mouth-melting dream.

Batica: Batica is a Goan sweet dish or dessert is prepared by first preparing a batter of grated coconuts, rawa, sugar, eggs and butter. The batter is mixed thoroughly and kept overnight. It is then poured into a baking dish and baked the next morning.

Chena Murki - This sweet which is made from milk and sugar is available in Orissa. To make this sweet, the milk has to be boiled for a long period of time until it becomes condensed. After that, sugar is added and the sweet is made into a round shape. Another name for this sweet is Pera .

Chhena jalebis - is a sweet dish originally from coastal Orissa in eastern India, a state known for desserts made of chhena. Its popularity has spread beyond coastal Orissa. These are made in a manner very similar to regular jalebis which are popular throughout India. However, the basic ingredient is cottage cheese, or chhena. Fresh chhena is thoroughly kneaded and rolled

up into shapes similar to pretzels, before being deep fried. The fully fried chhena pretzels are then soaked in a sugary syrup. Chhena jalebis are served either hot or chilled.

Chhena poda - is the quintessential cheese dessert from the state of Orissa in eastern India. Chhena poda literally means burnt cheese in Oriya. It is made of well-kneaded homemade cottage cheese or chhena, sugar, cashew nuts and raisins, and is baked for several hours until it browns. Chhena poda is the only well known Indian dessert whose flavor is predominantly derived from the caramelization of sugar.

Cham cham or chum chum - is a traditional Bengali sweet that is popular in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. It comes in a variety of colors, mainly light pink, light yellow, and white. It is also coated with coconut flakes as a garnish. The main ingredients are flour, cream, sugar, saffron, lemon juice, and coconut flakes.

Chikki - This is a traditional sweet made from groundnuts and jaggery. A variety of ingredients can be added to the chikki such as puffed rice, sesame and desiccated coconut. Some chikkis are made from pistachios, almonds and cashew nuts. To make chikkis, one needs to prepare the hot syrup made from jaggery. The nuts are then transferred using a wooden mould and then the chikkis are further rolled into 6-8mm using a wooden roller. Once cooled and hardened, the chikkis are then cut into squares.

Double ka meetha - is a dessert of Hyderabad and made from hot crisp fried roundels of bread, soaked in saffron and cardamom-flavoured syrup, topped with cream. It is similar to of Shahi tukre. It is called 'Double ka meetha' because it is made from Bread which is called 'Double Roti' in Hindi.

Doodhpak - is a dessert dish, a kind of rice pudding made from milk, rice, saffron and nuts, accompanied by pooris. The milk is slow-boiled to thickened and sweetened and the dish is garnished with chopped almonds. Doodhpak originates from Gujarat.

Dodol: Dodol is another famous Goan sweet, traditionally eaten at Christmas time, and made with rice flour, coconut milk, black jiggery of coconut palm and cashew nuts. It is usually cooled in a flat pan and served in slices, and is very sweet. (The Hindus call it Alvo and use a lighter colour jaggery made of sugarcane).

Halva (or *halwa*, *halua*) refers to many types of dense, sweet confections, served across the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Malta and the Jewish world.

The term *halva*, meaning "sweet", is used to describe two types of desserts:

- Flour-based – This type of halva is slightly gelatinous and made from grain flour, typically semolina. The primary ingredients are clarified butter, flour, and sugar.
- Nut-butter-based – This type of halva is crumbly and usually made from tahini (sesame paste) or other nut butters, such as sunflower seed butter. The primary ingredients are nut butter and sugar.

Halva may also be based on numerous other ingredients, including sunflower seeds, various nuts, beans, lentils, and vegetables such as carrots, pumpkins, yams, and squashes.

Gulab jamun is a popular dessert in countries of the Indian Subcontinent such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh. In Nepal it is widely known as Rasbari, served with or without curd, which is a popular dessert on all occasions. Traditionally, khoya, an Indian milk product (buffalo milk) is rolled into a ball together with some flour and then deep fried, but at a low temperature of about 148°C. It is then put into a sugar syrup flavored with cardamom seeds and rosewater, kewra or saffron.

Jalebi: It is made by deep-frying a partially fermented wheat-flour batter in pretzel or circular shapes, which are then soaked in sugar syrup. The sweets are served warm or cold. They have a somewhat chewy texture with a crystallized sugary exterior coating. Citric acid or lime juice is sometimes added to the syrup, as well as rosewater or other flavours such as kewra water. Kesar can be added to ot to make *kesariya jalebi*.

Imarti (Emarti or Jangiri) is a dessert from Rajasthan made by deep-frying urad flour batter in a kind of pretzel or circular shape, then soaked in sugar syrup.

N.B: **Difference between jalebi and imarti**..... First, they are made with different flours: *jalebi* is made with maida (all purpose) flour and *jangiri* with ground urad dhal. *Jalebi* batter is also supposed to be left to ferment (giving it a faint tangy flavour) while *jangiri* is not. There is also a difference in their appearance – the swirls of *jalebi* are more chaotic, while *jangiri* resembles a more organized flower pattern.

Those with a trained palate will also notice the slight crunchiness of *jalebi*, distinguishing it from the chewy, gooiness of *jangiri*. In most sweet shops, *jalebi* also appears a little shinier and more on the brown side (and *jangiri* more orange).

Kalakand, or Qalaqand is a popular Indian sweet made out of solidified, sweetened milk and cottage cheese. It owes its origin to the milk-rich Braj region of Uttar Pradesh. Kalakand is famous in Alwar, Rajasthan, India.

Kalojam: it is a traditional Bengali sweet in which the enriched flour dumplings are deep fat fried to a dark brown colour (and so is the name) and then soaked in a slow simmering sugar syrup.

Khaja - This sweet is made from refined flour, sugar and oil. This sweet is a delicacy of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. This sweet is said to be the favourite sweet of Lord Jagannath. In South India, a similar sweet is known as Badusahi. When Khaja is stuffed with dried fruits, it is then known as *Chandrakala* (half round) or *Suryakala* (full round). In Kutch, *Namkeen khaja* is taken but as a savoury as it is salty.

Kheer (Bengali: Payesh, Malayali: Payasam) is a rice pudding, which is a traditional South Asian sweet dish. This is an Indian pudding made from milk, vermicelli rice, semolina and tapioca. It is known by a variety of names across India, ie, Payasam in South India or Payesh in Bengal. Once the basic ingredients of milk, rice, ghee, sugar or jaggery are added, additional ingredients such as pistachios or almonds can be added to the mixture.

Kulfi or Qulfi is a popular frozen dairy dessert from the Indian Subcontinent. Kulfi has similarities to ice cream in appearance and taste, but is denser and creamier. It comes in various flavours, including cream (malai), raspberry, rose, mango, cardamom (*elaichi*), saffron (*kesar* or *zafran*), and pistachio, the more traditional flavours, as well as newer variations like apple, orange, strawberry etc. Unlike Western ice creams, kulfi is not whipped, resulting in a solid, dense frozen dessert similar to traditional custard based ice-cream. Thus, it is sometimes considered a distinct category of frozen dairy-based dessert. Due to its density, kulfi takes a longer time to melt than Western ice-cream.

Laddu: Laddu comes from the Sanskrit word transliterated as *ladduka* or *lattika* meaning a small ball. Laddu is made of flour and sugar with other ingredients that vary by recipe. It is often served at festive or religious occasions. Common flours used for laddu include besan (chickpea flour), rava (wheat semolina) and ground coconut. These are combined with sugar and other flavourings, cooked in ghee and moulded into a ball shape.

Malpoa - This sweet is an ancient home made sweet of India. There are different variations of this sweet in different parts of India. This sweet is widely available in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Maharashtra. Its main ingredients are plain flour, rice flour, sugar and coconut. This dish is an Indian version of the pancake.

Modak - is a sweet dumpling popular in Western and Southern India. *It is called modak in Marathi and Konkani as well as Gujarati language, modhaka or kadubu in Kannada, modhaka or kozhakkattai in Tamil, and kudumu in Telugu.* The sweet filling inside a modak is made up of fresh grated coconut and jaggery, while the soft shell is made from rice flour, or wheat flour mixed with khava or maida flour. The dumpling can be fried or steamed. The steamed version, called *ukdiche modak*, is eaten hot with ghee.

Mysore Pak - This sweet dish is a native of Karnataka and it is made with ghee, sugar and chick pea flour. It is believed that this dish was created in the kitchens of the Mysore Palace. It became known as the "Royal Sweet" of Mysore.

Narkel Naru - This sweet dish is from Bengal. It is made from khoya, condensed milk and coconut. This dish is consumed throughout India.

Peda, Pheda or Pera: Origin or popularity of Peda may be credited to the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, and the variety from the city of Mathura in that state was considered to be the best is a sweet from the Indian subcontinent, usually prepared in thick, semi-soft pieces. The main ingredients are khoa, sugar and traditional flavourings, including cardamom seeds, pistachio nuts and saffron. The colour varies from a creamy white to a caramel colour. The word *pera* is also generically used to mean a blob of any doughy substance, such as flour or (in the case of the sweet) khoa.

Parwal Mithai - This sweet dish is made from parwal (pointed gourd or green potato) while the filling is always from dairy products. This sweet dish is popular in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Pathishapta - This dish is a rolled pancake filled with coconut, milk, cream, jaggery and date palm. This dish is a Bengali dessert.

Pantua - is a local confection of eastern India and Bangladesh. It is a traditional Indian sweet made of deep-fried balls of semolina, chhana, milk, ghee and sugar syrup. Pantuas range in colour from pale brown to nearly black depending on how long they are fried. The name **ledikeni** is a rendition of "Lady Canning" and was first used by confectioner Bhim Nag when he renamed his pantuas specially prepared on the occasion of the birthday of Countess Charlotte Canning, wife of Governor-General Charles Canning. Rose water, cardamom or other flavourings are sometimes added to the sweet.

Phirnee: It is a traditional dessert served normally during the summer months. Soaked rice is ground into a paste and then added to boiling sweet milk. This is cooked until thickened and poured into terracotta pots. The extra moisture from the pudding is soaked by the earthenware pot and thus the pudding sets soft yet firm. It is then garnished with slivers of pistachio and strands of saffron

Puran poli - is a classical Marathi dish, which is a dessert served during auspicious occasions and during important festivals such as Holi, Padwa in Maharashtra. Although it resembles like a roti, a poli is actually very different. It is made mostly during holi when the bonfire is lit. The stuffing is known as puran and the outer cover is known as poli. The puran is made by boiling chickpea lentils with a pinch of turmeric for color. When the lentils are cooked and soft, the broth is removed and kept aside. Sugar is added to the chickpeas and cooked till they are soft. Then the stuffing is removed and sieved through a utensil made specifically for puran to achieve a smoother consistency. Saffron, cardamom, and nutmeg is added for additional flavor. The outer cover is made by making a dough by mixing refined flour, milk and ghee. Equal number of balls are made of the dough as well as the stuffing. The puran is stuffed inside the dough and then rolled out flat using a rolling pin. The poli is then coked on a hot griddle and served with ghee and a soup made from the surp.

Ras Malai is a sweet dessert originating in Eastern India and popular throughout the Indian subcontinent. Is served after a meal. It is popular throughout South Asia. The name Ras Malai comes from two parts in Hindi: Ras, which means Juice/Juicy, and Malai, which means cream. Ras Malai consists of sugary white, cream or yellow colored balls (or flattened balls) of paneer soaked in malai (clotted cream) flavored with cardamom.

Rasgulla - is a very popular cottage cheese-based, syrupy sweet dish originally from the Indian state of Orissa but highly popular in Bengal. It is popular throughout India and other parts of South Asia. The dish is made from ball shaped dumplings of chhena (an Indian cottage cheese) and semolina dough, cooked in light syrup made of sugar. This is done until the syrup permeates the dumplings.

Shankarpali is a snack popular in Maharashtra, India. It is traditionally enjoyed as a treat on the Diwali holiday.

Shahi Tukra - Truly a royal dessert, as its name suggests, Shahi Tukra is a rich bread pudding with dry fruits, flavoured with cardamom.

Pitha : Various kinds of Pitha (a pancake like sweet base of semolina or flour which is rolled around a variety of fillings like coconut and kheer and fried in ghee - chandrapuli, gokul, pati shapta, chitai piṭha, aski pithe, muger puli and dudh puli). Pithas are usually made from rice or wheat flour mixed with sugar, jaggery, grated coconut etc. These are usually enjoyed with the sweet syrups of Khejur gur (Date tree molasses)/ they are usually fried or steamed – the most common ones include bhapapitha (steamed), Pakanpitha (fried) and Pulipitha (dumplings)

Sohan Halwa or Sohan Halva is a traditional Indian and Pakistani sweet, which is a variety of dense, sweet confection or halwa and believed to be of Persian origin, linked with Iranian sweet Sohan. It is made by boiling a mixture of water, sugar, milk and cornflour until it becomes solid. Saffron is used for flavouring. Ghee is used to prevent it from sticking to the pan. Almonds, pistachios and cardamom seeds are added. Unlike most other halwa dishes in the subcontinent, it is solid by texture.

Sandesh - This is an Indian confectionery which originated in Bengal. Its main ingredients are milk and sugar. Some recipes of Sandesh call for the use of chhena (Indian cheese) or paneer instead of milk. Some people in the region of Dhaka call it Pranahara (literally, heart 'stealer') which is a softer kind of sandesh, made with mawa and the essence of curd.

Shrikand - Shrikhand is an Indian sweet dish made of strained yogurt. It is one of the main desserts in Indian cuisine. Preparation of this dish is very simple but it takes some time to process yogurt properly. To prepare shrikhand, yogurt is tied in a cotton cloth and left under pressure to drain. In the past, it used to be hung from a wall to achieve the desired thickness. The strained yogurt, referred to as "Chakka", and sugar are mixed thoroughly in a deep bowl. Cardamom, saffron, and any other flavors are then added and mixed. It is then left in the refrigerator for the sugar to dissolve. The dish is served chilled. Another variation of this dish can be found in Mahashtra is known as Amrakhand which is a mixture of mango pulp together with the yoghurt. In Gujarat, a variation of this dish is known as Matho.
