

Kulfi Sandesh in a *mishti* makeover

SWEET IT OUT FOR BHAI PHONTA



(Top, from left) Kulfi Sandesh, Butterscotch Sandesh and Nolen Gurer Truffle at Balaram Mullick and Radharaman Mullick. (Above) The rush at Girish Chandra Dey and Nakur Chandra Nandy on Monday. Pictures by Bishwarup Dutta

KINSUK BASU

different.”

Though Bhai Phonta is

ple Sandesh and Strawberry Sandesh,” said Partha Nandy

A dollop of kulfi mixed with *sandesh*, chilled in a cup at minus 4 degrees and served with a fork! Fusion *mishti* anyone, for Tuesday's Bhai Phonta?

Sweet shops in Calcutta are offering traditional savouries with a twist of taste, blending cream-of-rose or butterscotch or kheer or grated pistachio to come up with a tempting array of creations to suit the changing palate of the Bong brothers.

And the sisters? They are just loving it! The queues at the counters reflect the demand and several prominent shops had hired extra hands to keep the stocks replenished.

"We have crafted a special Shakuntala Sandesh with cashew, raisin and saffron and shaped like a lotus," said Pradip Nag of Bhim Chandra Nag, one of the oldest sweet shops in the city. "Along with the traditional Kheerer Khaja, people have been lining up in front of our shop since 6am for the special sweets that taste

steeped in tradition, the "something different" idea is catching up and pushing sales of new-age *mishtis* to new heights. This has prompted many sweet shops to innovate with the age-old, time-tasted *sandesh*.

"We have mixed the traditional kulfi with *sandesh* to prepare a new offering, served chilled in disposable cups," said Sudip Mullick of Balaram Mullick and Radharaman Mullick. "The idea is to offer something sweetly different... a *mishti* which is not."

Even if the ubiquitous *rosogolla* or Jolbhora remain all-time favourites, new-age culinary concoctions such as Kiwi Sandesh and Nolen Gurer Soufflé are catching the fancy of sisters willing to go the distance to please their *bhais*.

"We have changed the look of some of our sweets. The Butterscotch Sandesh has taken a squarish shape with a topping of liquid butterscotch. The same for Pineap-

of Girish Chandra Dey and Nakur Chandra Nandy, a sweet address synonymous with north Calcutta. "This year, it's sheer madness and we have hired additional hands to meet the demand."

For many, Bhai Phonta has offered the right opportunity to conjure some magic with the deliciously gooey *nolen gur*. Some of the top draws are *nolen gur*-filled Jolbhora Sandesh and *rosomalai*.

It's another matter that the best stuff is still on the way from the villages, where the jaggery is prepared from the juice of date palms.

Purists begged to differ, though. "We are not trying any new stuff, imitating others," said Dhiman Das of KC Das Private Limited. "Our fried *mishti*, including Balusai and Khaaja, are huge hits and we are struggling to meet the demand," he added.

What new sweet did you taste this Bhai Phonta? Tell
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