

Diwali sweets get an exotic twist

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Kolkata: Rossogolla, sandesh, pantua, bonde... if this list of typical Bengali sweets puts you off and makes you rush to shops that sell sweetmeats like kaju barfi, laddoo, moong dal laddoo, kesar pedas, etc, tarry. The biggest names in Bengali sweets are re-inventing themselves and are ready to display the fruits of their experiments this Diwali, keeping the youth in mind. The old favourites will continue to be made and sold, however, but the sweet makers have great expectations from their new creations that not only have exotic ingredients but also names.

The hot favourite destination, Balamullick — that has three shops in Bhowanipore, Park Street and Ballygunge Phanri — is all set to unveil its 'nolen gurer truffle sandesh' and 'chhanar cheese cake'. The names are enough to draw a crowd. The cheese cake will not only have generous helpings of real cheese but also succulent slices of pineapple. "I am sure that I will be able to grab the eyeball of the truffle cake-loving crowd with my sweets," laughs Sudip Mullick of Balamullick. Experimenting with sweets is a passion for this fourth generation sweetmaker.

Chocolate and liqueur are being used liberally by sweet makers in their experiments. Chocolate ro-

sogollas and sandesh are passé now, you will hear of Chocolate Excess and Chocolate Bonbon at Balamullick, where the bellies of sandesh are being filled with generous doses of pure liquid chocolate. Girish Chandra Dey and Nakur Chandra Nandy, a sweet landmark off Beadon Street, that is lovingly called Nakur, is also experimenting with chocolates in its sweets.



"Everyone is adding a lot of chocolate to its traditional sandesh preparations keeping changing tastes in mind. We are no exception and all variants of our chocolate sandesh have become a huge hit," said Partha Nandy of Nakur. The shop is now ready with its Madhuja — a stuffing of doi and kheer; malai, butterscotch and strawberry. Some other new sweets from here are chocolate malai rolls, three star sandesh with butterscotch, strawberry and

chocolate flavour etc.

Similarly, the 186-year-old Bhim Chandra Nag is introducing a sandesh that will have generous doses of chocolate and saffron to give an indigenous yet exotic taste to the sandesh, said Pradip Nag, proprietor. "We are yet to give it a name, but we will arrive at something before Diwali," Nag said.

The old sweet shop owners feel that there is a distinct demographic change in the city and while earlier they could depend solely on their loyal Bengali clientele, now they can in no way ignore the non-Bengali buyer. Moreover, young buyers' tastes have changed. Most sweet shop owners agree that the most popular dessert among the youth is ice cream and hence they have to now make sweets that can compete with this eternal favourite. So you have the gelato sandesh that has an equal mix of *chhana* and grated mangoes. The makers claim that these taste and feel as yummy as ice creams.

"My father-in-law swears by old sweets like langcha and ice cream sandesh. But neither me nor my husband are even interested. So this time he has promised us some rum-filled sweets from Balamullick. This is one of the latest innovations and we are looking forward to them," said Anusuya Banerjee, a homemaker who lives on Harish Mukherjee Road.