THE HINDU

FOOD

A jaggery discovery

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Inclement weather and a tummy infection are not enough to keep Rahul Verma away from a tub of his beloved nolen gur ice cream

It's not quite the season to be talking about ice cream, but it all started with a phone call. I had a bad tummy infection, so I was a little groggy. What I could tell was that the speaker wanted to talk about ice creams. I was too weak to protest, so she told me all about how you could get the best nolen gur ice cream at this new place in Connaught Place.

Now I have to admit that I have a weakness for nolen gur ice cream, which I first had a couple of years ago at Oh! Calcutta. I am not greatly fond of ice creams, but this was a delicious concoction of creamy thickened milk and Bengal's date palm jaggery that tastes like ambrosia. I later learnt that the ice cream was a rage in Calcutta, where it was on the menu of every Bengali restaurant in town.

I was interested in the caller's claim, because it was nice to know that the ice cream was now readily and easily available. I was also interested because I am fond of only a few flavours when it comes to ice creams. The ice cream boom happened when I was a callow youth, and Nirula's burst upon us with a host of flavours, including something that once Delhi-ites could never have enough of – 21 Love. I had that too, and Jamoca Almond Fudge, and so many other kinds of ice creams.

But let me tell you a secret. When it comes to sweets, I love the Indian varieties a lot more than the western counterparts. Likewise, in ice cream, I prefer the Indian flavours – such as kaju pista or malai kesar – over chocolate and hazelnut.

How to reach

And for that, I am glad that Pabrai's fresh & naturelle ice cream has opened its outlet in Delhi. Apart from CP (it's near Kake da Hotel and opposite Haldiram – Phone 9582812144), there is one in East Patel Nagar central market too. The fresh fruit flavours include muskmelon, pomegranate, tender coconut, mango, fig, custard apple and even jackfruit. The spicy flavours include cinnamon, green tea and wasabi. And among the exotic flavours is lemon grass.

I had sent my trusted emissary to buy nolen gurer ice cream, and she came back home with a 500ml tub of the ice cream, along with a small scoop in a cup (for Rs. 290). The ice cream was indeed delicious – the milk was thick and flavourful, and the gur flavour, of course, was heavenly.

What interests me most are the ice creams that figure under a list called Indian Flavours. This includes gandharaj lemon – a wonderfully fragrant lime of east India that can turn around a dal, or even steamed fish, in a second. The other flavours in this list are chandan (sandalwood), rose sandesh, paan, shahi kesar pista and elaichi badam.

The scoops are priced between Rs. 39 and Rs. 120 (not including taxes), and tubs between Rs. 196 and Rs. 378. The highest priced ice cream is one with mascarpone cheese and candied fruits.

If the nolen gur ice cream is anything to go by, this place deserves a second visit. I am reminded of a terrible childhood rhyme. I scream, you scream, we all scream, for ice cream! And if you have a better ending, let me know.

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