



COVER STORY

My sweet beloved

Do we eat to live? Or is it live to eat? For many of us, the latter is true. And for a large number of these gastronomically inclined people, desserts reign supreme. Many of us in the cities are quite familiar with the delectable doughnuts, muffins and pastries, thanks to the recently booming baking industry in the cities. But I am sure many of us also wistfully remember the joy that was a fresh steaming mishti, a roshgolla or perhaps a jilapi, often dripping with sheera, or syrup as we know it. There has been a long and on-going love affair between the people of Bengal and their beloved mishtis, leading to many regions developing their own specialties and delicacies.



BOGRA

To start with the obvious, perhaps no other heritage dessert item is as popular as the amazing and light sweetened curd that is Bogra's Mishti Doi. The tradition of curd making is ancient, and even the current tradition is at least 150 years old, with the Ghosh family of Sherpur being the industry pioneers. Later, Gouro Gopal Ghosh of the same family received significant patronisation and even a grant of land by the then Nawab of Bogra, Altaf Ali Chowdhury.

Later, two of his siblings also set up shops and the small cottage industry with a big reputation started off. And it is a well deserved reputation, for the makers here are very particular about the quality and process of making it.

The makers say the area now produces about 60,000 containers of curd everyday, in some fifty factories of varying sizes! Of

course, a lot of these are sent to the larger cities.

The two oldest curd makers in Bogra are Gouro Gopal Dodhi Bhandar and Ruchita Doi Ghor.

Asia Sweetmeat is also very popular. Interestingly, almost all of the curd produced in the region is kept in earthen pots and bowls of different sizes.

There are now more variants to the original Bogra curd, with different levels of sweetness, especially for the health conscious. "We have also introduced the Shahi Special curd, long with the usual plain, normal sweet, and special variants. The Shahi has very low sugar content, hence very light, and is completely white," Nurul Bashir Chandan, one of the owners of Asia Sweetmeat said. Each of the makers in Bogra and of course Sherpur, where the local tradition of curd making perhaps originated, has a somewhat different texture and taste to their product, and never gets boring.

NOAKHALI

Another region popular for its curd is Noakhali, as their special variant is made of buffalo milk! Mostly the buffaloes are raised in the coastal island of the region, like Hatiya, Subarnachar, and Kobir-haat. There are also some other remote and hard to access islands used to rear buffaloes, as land is a scarce thing in such a small and overpopulated country like ours. The curd is slightly tangy, and hence is recommended by doctors as being good for health, especially to cut bad cholesterol.



PABNA

Rosh-kodom is a familiar name to any mishti lover. Love it or hate it, you undoubtedly have seen it sitting in the store racks - little brown spherical sweets completely covered in hard, tiny sugar-balls. Its origin is in Pabna, and it is still quite popular there, as well as everywhere else!

