

MY SWEET beloved

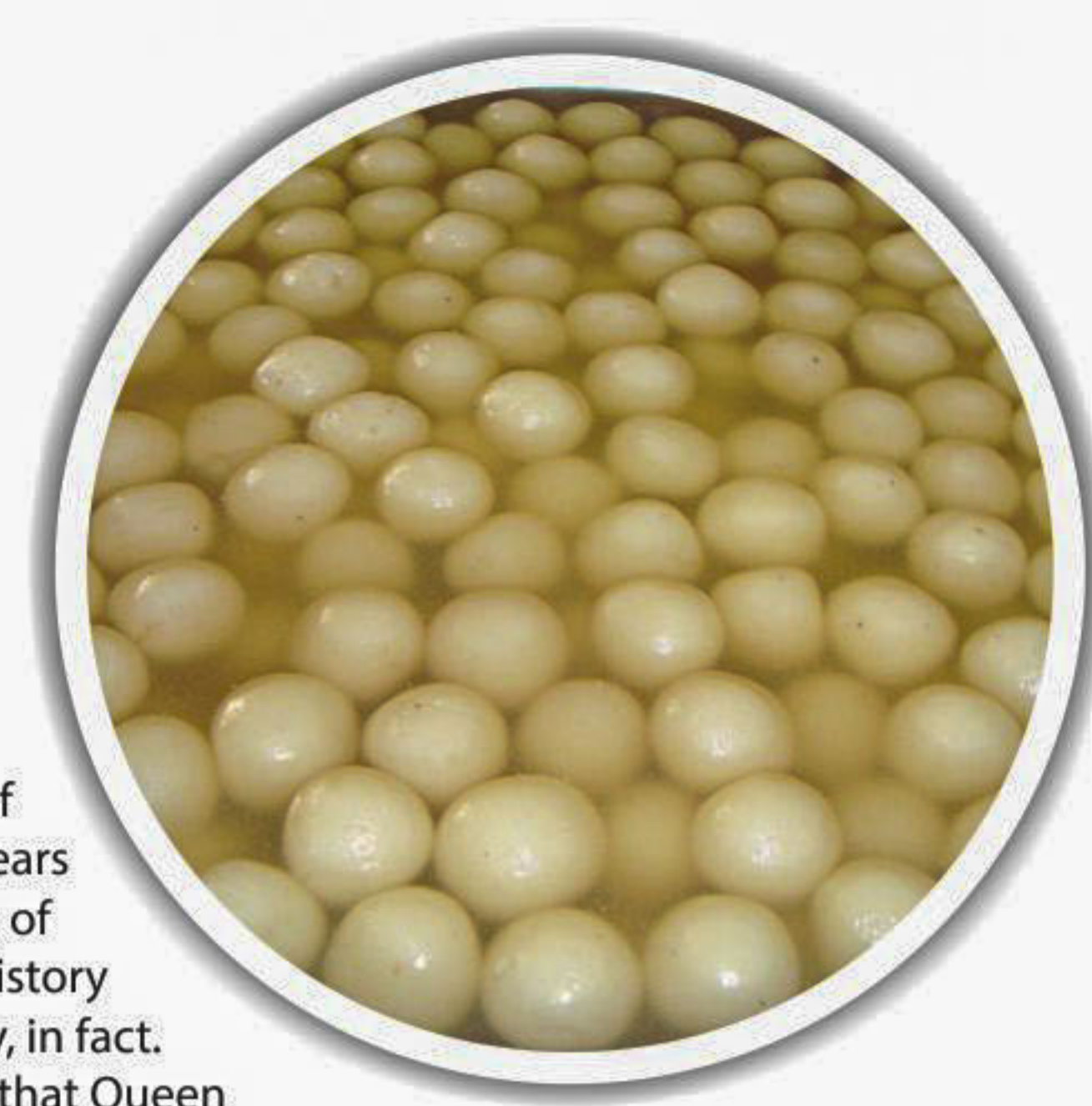
NATORE

Another sweet with a heritage of more than 250 years is the Kachagolla of Natore. It has a history of serving royalty, in fact.

Legend has it that Queen Bhabani of Natore had one Modhusudan Das of the nearby Lalbajar region supply her with sweets. Modhusudan once had a bit of trouble with an absentee employee and about 80 kilograms of chhana (is fresh, unripened curd cheese made from milk) sitting in his shop, intended for supply to the queen.

So, while trying to figure out how to save the chhana from going bad, he added some syrup, and kept stirring, only to see the syrup evaporate. To see how the chhana fared, he tasted it, and found it quite delicious.

Thence began the Kachagolla...oh, by the way, the queen loved it too, and it became a regular feature on her table.



The chhanamukhi is also known as Lady Cany in the area, and there is an interesting anecdote behind that. Apparently, during the British colonial raj, Lord and Lady Canning had high praises for the chhanamukhi when they had the one made by Mohadeb Paar of Mohadeb Potti, which led to the sweet getting its local name.



JHENIDAH

Roshgolla is perhaps the one sweet which will have the least number of detractors—such is the popularity it enjoys. A well-known version is available in Jhenidah, at the stores by the two brothers Shymal Biswas and Ashoke Biswas, in the region's Kalganj area. They have held on to the tradition of making it from their father, who passed away in 2013.

So be it the sugar rush you crave, or the mood-lifting endorphins released by the sweet essence in the very first bite of a succulent mishti, there is no lack of local 'legendary' items to try out this Baishakh and beyond.

JHALOKATHI

Roshmalai...yum. And of course, bigger the better! So it would seem that the Jumbo Roshmalai of Jhalokathi is the perfect creation for sweet lovers. And among the best known producers is Belayet Sweetmeat in Naikathi of Rajapur, some 15 kilometres away from the district headquarters.

"We sell about 400 Jumbo Roshmalai every day, and even that is far less than the demand. But I cannot make any more for the lack in regular supply of milk," Belayet, the owner of the shop said.

Each roshmalai is usually about 100 grams and sells for about Tk 25 each. It is a soft succulent sweet sitting in a light milky base.

COMILLA

How can we forget Comilla? And it's oh so delicious roshmalai? The original Matribhandar of Comilla was in fact so well known for their sweet delectable that many tried whilst others borrowed the name in their efforts to mimic the famous roshmalai. Roshmalai is made of small soft beads of curdled meat sitting in thickened sweet creamy milk. And the one from Comilla just happens to be seeped in the sweet making culture --and hence experience-- of a hundred years at least!

CHANDPUR

Chandpur has a contender to offer against Jhalokathi's roshmalai, with a very interesting name – the 'One Minute Roshgolla'. The One Minute though just happens to be the name of the shop, which had humble beginnings as a roadside tea stall. The sweet is purely made of cottage cheese, as about 25 kilograms milk is used to make just 13 kilograms of roshgolla at One Minute, said Shampad Shaha, son of the original owner Bharat Shaha, who has since passed away.



BRAHMANBARIA

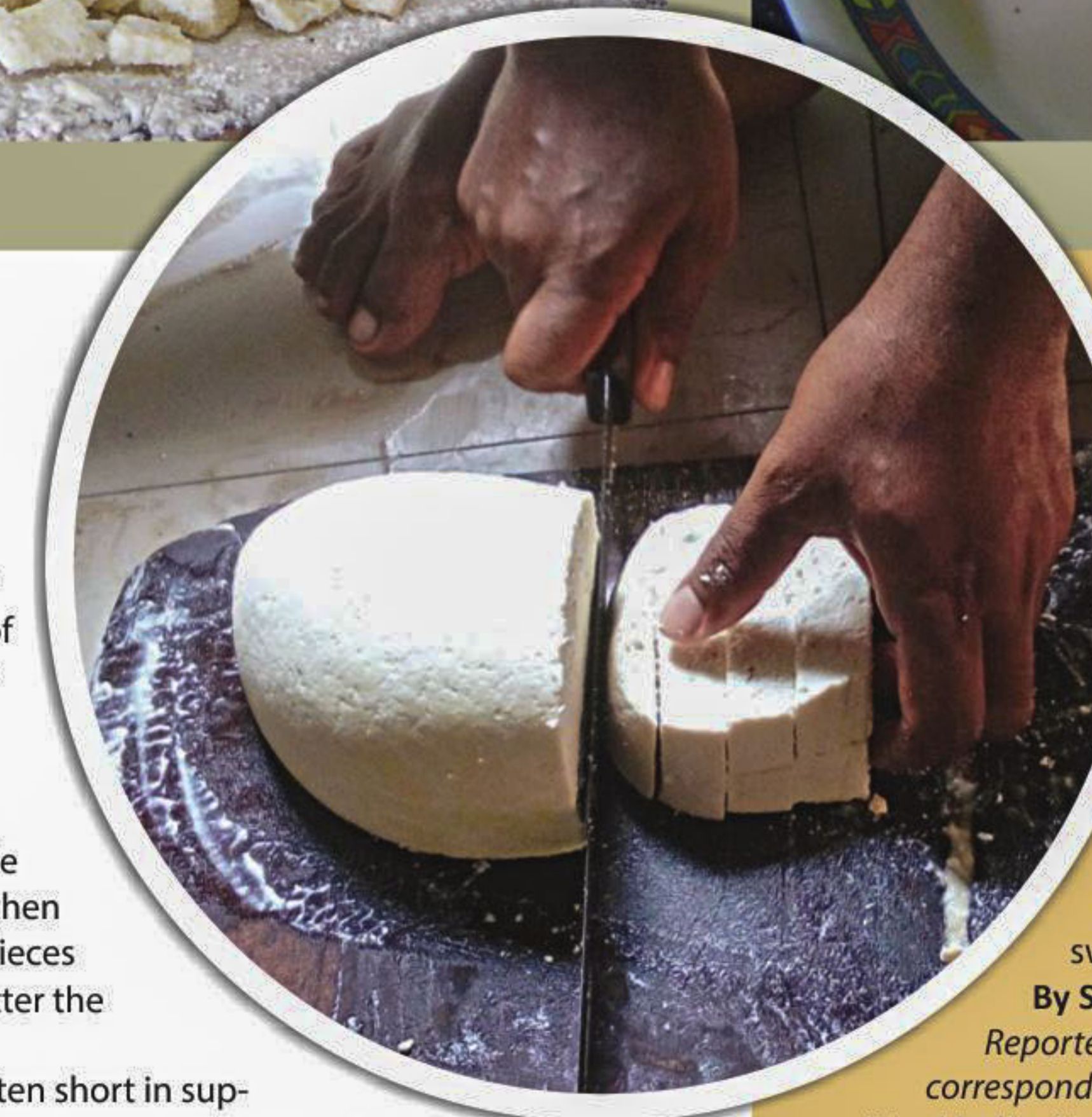
Another well-known mishti happens to be Brahmanbaria's Chhanamukhi.

"About 60 litres of milk and 10 kilograms of sugar are required to make just 10 kilograms of chhanamukhi", said Gopal Das, a mishti maker at Mohadeb Mistanno Bhandar, to give us an idea of the item's richness. It is a hard, square and sugar dusted sweet.

To make chhanamukhi, the milk is first made into chhana, or cottage cheese. The cheese is then compressed into a flat block, cut into square pieces and then fried in syrup. The deeper the fry, better the chhanamukhi!

Sadly, since the supply of suitable milk is often short in supply, the legendary mishti of Brahmanbaria is not always available in all the shops of the region.

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CHITTAGONG

Although better known for their Mezbaan and Ziafat items and a cuisine heavily reliant on beef and fish, the region is also known for its Balushahi. These are made with stiff dough of all-purpose flour. Chunky spherical or oblong discs of the dough are fried in ghee, and a pinch of baking soda mixed into the dough gives it a soft flaky texture. The fried pieces are then dunked in a thick syrup of sugar to make a uniform coating; the result is a very sweet yet tasty balushahi.

By Sania Aiman

Reported and photos collected by The Daily Star's correspondents Mamun-ur-Rashed (Bogra), Nurul Amin (Noakhali), Humayun Kabir Topu (Pabna), Mirza Shakil (Tangail), Rabiul Hasan (Chapainawabganj), Khalid Bin Nazrul (Comilla), Bulbul Ahmed (Natore), Mashuk Hridoy (Brahmanbaria), Azibor Rahman (Jhenidah), M Jahirul Islam Jewel (Jhalokathi) and Alam Palash (Chandpur).