

Eat like a king

Originally created in the kitchens of the royal palace, an iconic sweet treat is widely beloved on the streets of Mysore

The cries of vendors ring out in Devaraja Market as customers shuffle through the narrow lanes. Dating back to the 18th century and the reign of Tipu Sultan, this famous bazaar – located three hours from Bangalore – is a warren of shops selling everything from fresh Mysore jasmines and colourful holi powders to a wide array of fruit and vegetables.

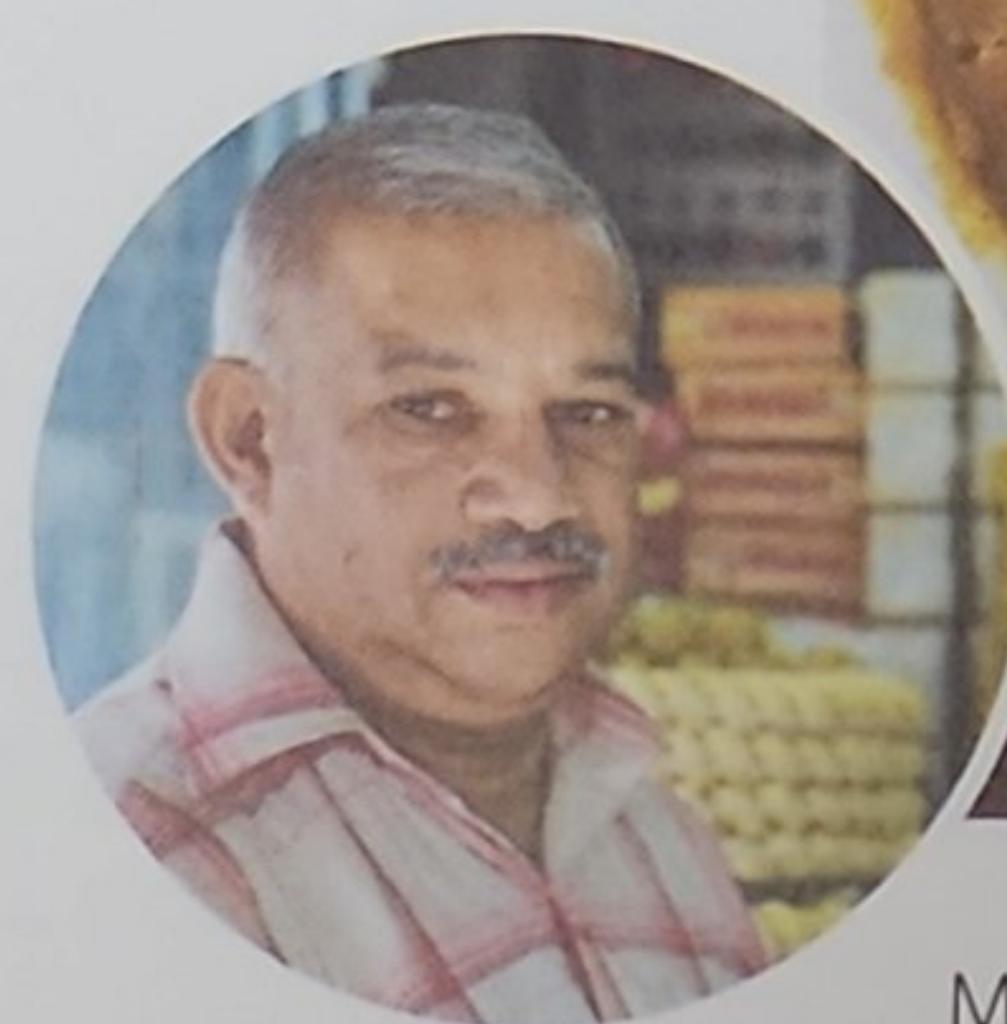
A highlight of this charmingly chaotic market is the Guru Sweet Mart, founded by the descendants of Kakasura Madappa, the former royal chef at Mysore Palace. It isn't much to look at, but visitors flock to the shop for a taste of its most well-known sweet treat, the Mysore pak.

"My great-grandfather created the Mysore pak for King Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV nearly a hundred years ago," says the current owner of Guru Sweet Mart, Kumar Sangaraju. The story goes that the king liked it so much he asked for the treat's name (and a second serving). Since Madappa hadn't thought of one, the king dubbed it Mysore pak, as the sweet was made in



A FESTIVE TREAT

Mysore pak is popular during Mysore Dasara, a festival held across the city in the Hindu month of Ashvin (10 to 19 Oct this year). This festival celebrates the goddess Chamundeshwari's victory over the demon Mahishasura and sees thousands of lights strung up around the city.



Mysore and used sugar syrup, called pak in Kannada.

This recipe, handed down through generations, sees sugar and water melted in ghee and then combined slowly with gram flour. Cardamom and turmeric are added while a strong-armed cook stirs the ingredients continuously for 45 minutes to one hour. The hot, thick liquid is cooled and served once it solidifies. The result is an aromatic, melt-in-your-mouth pleasure.

While Mysore pak is now available in sweet shops across India, the recipes

can differ wildly. At Guru Sweet Mart, it is prepared by cooks with more than 10 years of experience. While he is coy about their secret ingredient, Kumar divulges their unique cooking method.

"Even today, we still cook with coal to retain the flavour and texture and stay true to our tradition," Kumar says.

With the king's blessing, the cook's son Basavanna opened a first shop in Ashok Road before moving to the current site on Sayyaji Rao Road in 1954. Since then, sweet lovers have flocked here for a taste of the royal recipe.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT
KUMAR SANGARAJU IS THE FOURTH GENERATION OF HIS FAMILY TO MAKE MYSORE PAK; INTERIORS OF GURU STREET MART; A PLATE OF MYSORE PAK



OTHER FORMER ROYAL DISHES THAT CAN BE ENJOYED BY THE MASSES

HYDERABADI BIRYANI

Many think the royal kitchens of **Hyderabad** are the origins of this fragrant rice dish. Tuck into the great version at Café Bahar. fb.com/cafebaharhyd



CHAO TOM

This snack of shrimp grilled on sugarcane is said to have originated in the imperial kitchens of **Hue**. Try it at Ancient Hue Restaurant, in Hue. ancienthue.com.vn



NA TANG

This Cambodian starter of deep-fried sticky rice comes with a minced pork, chilli and coconut milk sauce. Try it at **Siem Reap's Mahob Khmer Cuisine**. mahobkhmer.com