

EXOTIC EDIBLES 45 MINUTES



Arabian delight

Kunafa in Meherchand market, spells heaven for the sweet tooth. EKTAA MALIK discovers its Palestinian antecedents. Apparently the Syrians make the best *Baklava* in the world

It would be a trade model, if employed by the world at large. Pistachios, walnuts and dates are sourced from the Middle East, then made into a sweetmeat, easily described as a heavenly bite.

The militia could easily be bought over by these tiny store houses of energy and proteins.

The taste is an after effect. We can solve the problems of the world later, but with impending festivals, we have another issue that requires our immediate attention and resolution.

Bored with *Kalakand*, *Gulab jamun* and *Kaju Barfi* this Rakhi and Teej? Serve out a platter of sweets that originate in Palestine, made from recipes that have been family secrets for generations.

When Raghu Sehgal was about to leave his agro business in Dubai, he was invited by friend Nasser Barakat to visit his home in Jordan. That was where Raghu saw the clan hard at work, making *Kanafeh*, or *kunafa*, as its popularly known in the Middle East.

The plan was hatched to get the sweets to India.

The result is Kunafa, a one stop shop for sweets and desserts from the Arabic world.

"We have the entire range. We change varieties on a rotational basis, but the larger strata is same," shared Raghu, who with his jolly nature and portly built, could be the



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The Kunafeh is the best selling product. It's a small pastry, stuffed with cheese, pistachios and sweetened with honey. There are 30 kinds served there. A few are filled with walnuts and figs

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local *halwai*. But that's where comparisons stop. Raghu knows his sweets, and what goes into their making. He also knows how to crack the tough logistics, getting pista and hazelnuts from Iran, dates from Jericho. "Palestinians have to pay a heavy duty for freight to Israelis. India charges heavy import duty," informed Raghu.

Kunafa is a few months old, and has already gathered a momentum with expat communities.

A couple from Jordan are regulars here. They picked out favourites from the range.

"The *Kunafeh* and *Baklava* are the best selling products," shared



Raghu. *Kunafeh* is a small pastry, stuffed with cheese, pistachios, and sweetened with honey. There are about 30 kinds served there. Some are filled with walnuts and figs, others have a hint of cinnamon. "We use vermicelli to make the crispy crust. There is also the *Basbousa*, (a sugary cake with dried

fruits), both Egyptian and Syrian," added Raghu.

We assumed that Turkey was the land of *Baklava*. "No. It's the Syrians who have the best hands in the business. No question."

There are 15-16 varieties of *Baklava* at Kunafa. The eatery also serves Turkish coffee and tea. All black. No milk products are served at Kunafa.

The walls are painted with a mural, like a Middle Eastern café. The wall also has Nasser Barakat's image, (business partner of Raghu) painted on. "We just wanted him here with us," concluded Raghu. Pamper your self.