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a feast for the eyes and the palate

ONE of the new breed of confectioneries in Dhaka offering a tempting array of cakes, pastries, cookies and other baked items is the much famed King's confectionery. The others in this spectrum are Hot Breads, Nandan's Bakery & Mr. Baker. While Hot Breads has been there for a while, King's is a recent entrant in the confectionery market. King's has become quite a rage in a very short while and for birthday parties and other special occasions "a cake from King's" has now become a must for the affluent members of the society.

Hidden among the hustle and bustle of Road 11 in Banani, King's offers "temptations" wrapped in a delightful ambience, which makes self-control take a back seat. Apart from the usual clairs, donuts and cookies, King's also has some atypical items such as the Japanese biscuits priced at Tk.25 per packet which look more like elongated potato chips and "Panday Chiffon" which looks like a magnified donut but is actually a cake.



King's certainly sets the benchmark for the most delicious and exquisite cakes around. Most of the cakes available here are "edible works of art". The look and shape is very different from the run of the mill cakes found in other confectioneries. Neena, a young woman, is an avid fan of the cakes as she can try out different flavors such as mocha and blueberry. "Cartoon Candy" for example is a cake set in white base with cartoon character Garfield and with splashes of green, orange and yellow. The "Chocolate Mousse" cake is shaped like a dome and looks very tempting while the "Cappuccino" and "Blueberry cake" with their bright cherry decorations look sinfully tasty. The average price per kilogram of cake is Tk.1000, which is certainly not exorbitant considering the freshness, the taste and the adornments of the cake.

But King's is not altogether a dieter's nightmare. Apart from pastries, King's has different types of breads as well as some low sugar delicacies for the health conscious, dieters and the diabetics. Sovital bread, French village bread and Plus Minus bread are all sugarless and multigrained yet

appetizing. King's has a variety of cookies packed very attractively with lace and a partially transparent paper box. The popular ones are royal almond, peanut butter and rock buns.

The flavours, packaging, colourful wall paintings, lovely hanging lamp shades and the ambience conspire to make King's an experience worth repeating for customers. Plus King's gives the customers the "right to choose" from a wide variety of delectables. Salman, a young executive, believes that King's helps you to make a lasting impression by enabling you to pick up quick edible gifts for your hostess, boss or even for the special someone in your life.

Some children and adults are hooked to King's. Anika, 5, for example, refuses to go to school without King's chocolate éclair in her tiffin box. Maisha, a teenager loves the Blueberry cake while Azra, an executive in a well-known company, said that she found the tuna pattice scrumptious.

The crowd here is varied with a greater proportion of families and office executives. Most teenagers love the pastries at King's but they do not "hang out" here. King's has seating arrangement indoors, in the terrace. However, because of the layout most customers prefer browsing and taking the confectioneries home.

Hot breads in Banani in comparison is a place where people like sitting and snacking. Their "Black Forest" cake is a crowd pleaser and so are "American Brownies". Hot Breads has a number of swiss confectioneries such as Spitzbuben and Rocher Swiss, only to name a few. One thing very reassuring about Hot Breads is that its bake shop is visible from the counter where you can witness busy bakers rolling out the dough or lining up freshly baked breads on a sheet.

In contrast to King's and Hot Breads, which has an assortment of confectioneries from all over the world, Lavendar's confectionery is based mainly on European confectionery, in a platter particularly at snack time. The sugar donut and chocolate muffins priced at Tk.30 and Tk.40 are incredibly tasty. Even the soft cheesecake available at Tk.100 is a good option. Fresh croissants, danishes and shortbreads are also affordable. The most remarkable part of this bakery is that it displays freshly baked cakes every day. Lavendar's Bakery is located within the premises of WIMPY in Banani.

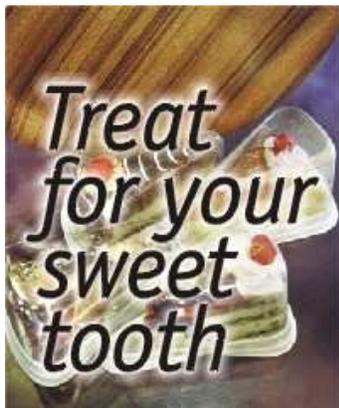
Nandan's Bakery located in Nandan in Kemal Ataturk is a small bakery, which is specialized in cakes. They have plain cakes at Tk.80 and Fruit cake at Tk.125 per pound. Though Nandan's Bakery has less of a variety in pastries and cakes, their confectioneries are fresh and succulent. Its crowd mainly consists of shoppers and staff who grab a quick bite while shopping. The look of the bakery is cosy and appealing with its chairs and small round tables bordered with red.

Mr. Baker present in Uttara at Rajlakhsmi and now DOHS is also a fairly popular confectionery in the city. Its cakes and pastries are scrumptious and well decorated. The shops are both quite small and basically one cannot take a seat for a snack. However, the confectionery speaks for itself, the quality is simply wonderful. The white chocolate cakes and the chocolate cakes are both very popular, and besides they also have snacks like pattises and sausage rolls.

Confectionery shops in Dhaka are finally "coming of age" and giving the Dhakaites an attractive and exotic blend of pastries and desserts. They promise fresh ingredients and superior standard of hygiene. And of course they give us a chance to indulge ourselves and others, in feasting our eyes and tastebuds...

Bon Appetit !

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By Malina Islam Halim
Photos by Ms Bindu
Special thanks to Kings Confectionery



*Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake
Baker's man,
Bake me a cake
As fast as you can.*

What's with all the rush? You see, baked goodies have a tendency to make the glands in your mouth become hyperactive. It is not so much as a growling stomach but the need to sink your teeth and roll your tongue over a delicious morsel. It's a treat for your sense of taste as opposed to satisfying your hunger pangs.

Bakeries and confectioneries create all the tasty cakes, biscuits, pastries, patties etc. You have them after meals as dessert or with tea in the evening. This is so you can isolate your taste buds and delve into a world of gastronomical sensations.

Bakeries came up somewhere in the 14th century. In those days they created dough using flour, oil, sugar and nuts. These were cut into different shapes and put into raging ovens to roast. Often these baked items were quite big in size. Family members would cut off chunks to later nibble on. In the 17th and 18th centuries, large cakes, breads and cookies were all the rage in France, Greece, Rome, America and England. Bread and cakes were staple tabletop items, the latter of which was often decorated with cream and icing. It was a must have item on the menu for any gathering.

In 1815 "Kings Cake" became a famous type of cake for all festivities all over America and Europe. The popularity of baked items increased in Germany following the renaissance. One of their most famous items was the huge buns similar to submarine sandwiches which unfortunately we don't get here.

In our country the baking profession falls under the cottage industry. The reason is that generally baked confections were made at home by family members. These were sold either from the house itself by setting up showcases outside or the owners would act as suppliers for shops.

A lot of the bakeries in Dhaka are very old. Some are about a century old. Some that have been established in the early 80's are still doing great business. Most have started out as family ventures and have been handed down through generations.

In these times there is a bewildering array of food available for the hungry palate. Unfortunately a lot of people turn away from bakeries considering them as a remnant of the past. What catches people's eyes and stomachs are the new fast food shops. For many, these snacks have become segregated into two categories. The younger generation is busy gulping down burgers, pizzas and sandwiches. Different sorts of breads and cookies are for the older generation.

This new fangled fast food craze in Bangladesh actually had its roots in the bakeries. Since the 70's, people especially school and office goers started to grow an affinity towards instant food. Hence, bakeries started stocking all sorts of rolls, sandwiches etc alongside their cookies and cakes. Kebabs were shoved in between two buns and were called burgers. Baked dough sprinkled with vegetable, meat and a lot of onions were called pizzas. And people went nuts for these. Fast food in our country became an offspring of bakeries.

Different baked goodies

There are quite a few bakery items that are very popular even now. There is toast biscuit, hot patties and butter roll with a sweet creamy filling. Cakes include the regular yellowish type along

with fruit cakes and party cakes. The range of biscuits include those with Horlicks and Ovaltine flavor as well as salted biscuits. Some items are named after the process. For example there is a biscuit that is designed using pressure from the thumb so it became known as 'tipa' biscuit.

The president of the Bangladesh Bakery and Confectionery Owners Association Md. Jalal Uddin stated that this is a business that is hand built by many people. It requires a lot of effort but comparatively the profit is not so high.



He also said that bakeries are not losing out to fast food shops. The reason is that there are a lot of barriers toward further improving the quality and the quantity of different items available at bakeries. The government provides no assistance toward this industry. Adding insult to injury this year there have been heavy taxes levied upon bread and biscuit. This increased VAT leads to an increase in the price of the finished goods to maintain quality. This burden will fall on the shoulders of the general consumers. He fears that many small bakeries will close as a result and many people will lose their jobs.

He also informed that there are about 3500 bakeries linked with the association. Out of these about 800 operate in Dhaka alone.

Famous bakeries in Dhaka:

Capital Confectionery and Bakery: It started towards the end of the 19th century. It is a family business and they sell all kinds of cakes, biscuits and breads that are very popular in the old town. They have branches in Bailey Road, Lakshmibazaar and Baitul Mukarram.

Olympia Bakery: This is another old bakery started from 1940. It's a family business that has proudly maintained a high level of quality throughout the years. Their branches are in New Market, Baitul Mukarram and Motijheel. Soon they will be opening an outlet in Gulshan.

Light Confectionery: It is a similarly old establishment operating in New Market and Baitul Mukarram.

Yusuf Bakery: It started off in the 40's and is also a family based business. They have a very good name for their cakes and operate in Malibaagh, Bangla Motors, Rampura, Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Old Dhaka, Rai Shaheb bazaar and in Bailey Road near the Ramna police station.

Ananda Bakery: This bakery gained popularity selling quality food and they set up after the Liberation War. They have two branches. One is in Old Dhaka and the other is near the Tejgaon Shahin College. They run a bakery and fast food shop side by side.

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By Sultana Yasmin
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