

DEEPAVALI 2021 FOOD

This Deepavali, traditional mithai takes on a vegan avatar

PRIVADERSHINI S

OCTOBER 23, 2021 15:59 IST
UPDATED: OCTOBER 23, 2021 15:59 IST

SHARE ARTICLE f t w p e p PRINT A | A | A



Ahead of Deepavali 2021, chefs and home cooks are trying creative ways to make traditional Indian sweets vegan, replacing milk with coconuts, jaggery and even tofu

Oil-free, sugarless, no-dairy gulab jamuns? Shalu Nijhawan, a whole plant-based nutritionist, says it is possible. After two years of trial and error, she has succeeded in creating a vegan version, which she will teach during an online pre-Deepavali cookery class aptly titled 'Impossible Sweets'.

The session is being hosted by Sanctuary for Health and Reconnection to Animals and Nature (SHARAN), an Auroville-based organisation dedicated to spreading awareness about holistic health.

Also Read | How India is leaning into better vegan options, across the board

Shalu will also be sharing recipes for vegan versions of traditional sweets like *ras malai*, *khoya gujiya* and Bombay Karachi *halwa*. "I am so excited about getting it right; I feel it's a *dhamaka* (blast) in the world of traditional vegan sweets," she says, adding that she adopted a vegan lifestyle after it helped reverse her husband's auto-immune disorder. A growing market for vegans has encouraged sweet makers and food innovators to experiment with *mithai* for the upcoming festive season.

V Aravindan's Coimbatore-based Vijay Sweets specialises in vegan treats. His trademark offering, Mysore Pak, is made with coconut milk instead of ghee with barely a difference in taste. It now comes in five varieties: beetroot, carrot, palm jaggery, coconut milk and mixed nuts. This year, he is curating customised Diwali hampers priced between ₹500 and ₹2,000, which are filled with everything from cashew pedas to the Ironman laddoo incorporating dates, cashew, melon, cucumber and pumpkin seeds.

Also Read | Vijay Sweets' vegan mysore pak, delivered to your doorstep



Aravindan's family turned vegan four years ago, and converted their sweet shop to vegan-only sweets.

Being one of the pioneers in this field, they were faced with many challenges. One of the biggest was training their existing staff to work with alternative ingredients. As trendsetters, they had no products to compare theirs with and no one to take inspiration from. "We had to understand the behaviour of these alternative products and test out their shelf life," says Aravindan.

He adds that the family concentrates on "cracking tough traditional sweets" into vegan ones. Trials are on for baked *rasmalai* and *gulab jamun*. "Our motto is to make vegan sweets accessible to all," states Aravindan. Though ingredients are expensive, he keeps the price 20% lower than dairy-based sweets.

Festive recipes

Mumbai-based chef Vandana Tiwari, who turned vegan seven years ago to reverse her hyperthyroidism, made chocolate *modaks* for Ganesh Chaturthi this year. "We can convert any dessert into its vegan form," she says. Vandana completely did away with ghee and used dates to sweeten the chocolate *modak*, made with a mix of almond and cocoa powder. She also makes *modaks* with red rice flour, stuffed with a mix of grated coconut, cardamom and dry dates powder. She's planning Deepavali hampers under her label Vegan Essence, that will include *mithais*, cakes and snacks like *gujiyas*, *chaklis*, *chivda* and more. Vandana substitutes all processed ingredients in her recipes.

Also Read | Chef Mandaar Sukhtankar on the beauty of modaks

Gautam Agicha's kitchens at AAA Gourmet Foods, Mumbai, are also buzzing with trials of *laddoos* made with a mix of jaggery, to which are added unprocessed flours like *bajra* (pearl millet), *sattu* (roasted horsegram flour) or quinoa. "These will be part of boxes of vegan sweets for Diwali," says Gautam, who set up the business of health foods in August last year and is surprised by the growing niche market. His sweet shop sees movement in a ratio of 90:10 in the sweet versus the vegan sweets market.

Reyna Rupani, head of SHARAN's Mumbai team, points out that there's vegan and there's healthy vegan. "Sugar and jaggery are vegan, but we are for healthy veganism and so we use dates for sweetening," she says. Reyna, who recently tasted *gulab jamuns* made from sweet potatoes, believes that gifting a box of healthy sweets is more accepted now than ever before. When she turned vegan seven years ago, there were "hardly any options" but now there is plenty to choose from.



Shalu recalls her dogged resolve to get the flavour of *gulab jamun* right. She used cashew and wheat in the recipe and tofu for the *ras malai*. "The look is almost similar but not milky white," says Shalu, who is set to open a plant-based delivery kitchen in Bengaluru, where she resides.

Rose Pinto converted to veganism and now conducts Millet workshops and runs an organic store in Mumbai. Rose places orders for vegan cakes and sweets with her 'students' to encourage them to cook and cater. She makes laddoos using pulses, mainly green gram.

Meanwhile, Gautam is trying hard to get the Mohanthal and Lola, a Sindhi dessert, right for this season, using *kapli* (emmer wheat) flour. "The trials are on and we should get the sweet ready in time for Diwali."

Vegan malpua recipe

Ingredients: 1 cup whole wheat flour; 1 tsp crushed fennel seeds (*saunf*); 3-4 crushed cardamoms (*elaichi*) OR ½ tsp cardamom powder; 3 tbsps full fat coconut milk; 3 tbsps coconut butter; 3 tbsps almond paste; ½ cup water; ½ tsp baking soda

For the topping: ½ cup coconut milk; ½ cup date paste; ½ tsp cardamom powder; 2 tbsps mix of almonds and pistachios, for the garnish



Method: In a bowl, mix whole wheat flour, fennel seeds and cardamom. Add thick coconut milk, coconut butter, almond paste and half a cup of cup water. Mix well to obtain a thick pourable batter, without lumps. Allow the batter to rest for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, soak the almonds and pistachios in hot water for 20-30 minutes. Slice them and keep them aside. Add baking soda to the malpua batter, mix well.

On low heat, gently pour two-three tablespoons of the batter onto a heated *tawa*. Spread the batter lightly with the back of the spoon. You could make multiple malpua side by side, depending on the size of the *tawa*. Roast *malpua*s on low-medium heat, turning them over a couple of times, until crisp & golden on both sides.

For the topping, mix the coconut milk, date paste and cardamom powder. Pour over the *malpua*, garnish with sliced nuts and serve.

THE HINDU

Our code of editorial values

Related Topics

The Hindu MetroPlus

- Comments will be moderated by The Hindu editorial team.
- Comments that are abusive, personal, incendiary or irrelevant cannot be published.
- Please write complete sentences. Do not type comments in all capital letters, or in all lower case letters, or '1st', (example: a cannot substitute for you, it is not 'they' or 'is not'...)
- We may remove hyperlinks within comments.
- Please use a genuine email ID and provide your name, to avoid rejection.

Comments

TRENDING TODAY

CLIMATE CHANGE TWENTY20 WORLD CUP CORONAVIRUS



74K | Data | Indians can travel visa-free to only 58 countries
27K | Graft charge against NCB in Aryan Khan drugs case, agency refutes
21K | India-made spray linked to rare illness in U.S.
14K | Imran Khan lauds Pakistan's victory over India in T20 World Cup
10K | Pakistan finally gets it right against India in the World Cup
9K | Pakistan prisoner killed in Poonch firing

<p>TRENDING TODAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Friends' actor James Michael Tyler, known for role of G... Imran Khan lauds Pakistan's victory over India in T20 Wo... Pakistan prisoner killed in Poonch firing Pakistan finally gets it right against India in the World Cup Graft charge against NCB in Aryan Khan drugs case, age... PM Modi to inaugurate nine medical colleges in U.P. China's new law 'formalises' its LAC actions When citizens are manipulated on social media, they dis... Explained Why is India facing bouts of extreme weather? Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat warns of war... 	<p>TRENDING TOPIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Point Coronavirus The Hindu Explains Twenty20 World Cup 	<p>TRENDING ON OUR WEBSITE</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>BUSINESSLINE</td> <td>SPORTSTAR</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stock Market</td> <td>T20 World Cup</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Water Rights</td> <td>India</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>T20 World Cup 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>T20 World Cup 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>T20 World Cup</td> </tr> </table>	BUSINESSLINE	SPORTSTAR	Stock Market	T20 World Cup	Water Rights	India		T20 World Cup 2021		T20 World Cup 2021		T20 World Cup
BUSINESSLINE	SPORTSTAR													
Stock Market	T20 World Cup													
Water Rights	India													
	T20 World Cup 2021													
	T20 World Cup 2021													
	T20 World Cup													