



THE GUIDE

EDITED BY
TINAZ NOOSHIAN
tinaz.nooshian@mid-day.com

MONDAY, 8 FEBRUARY, 2010. MUMBAI
www.mid-day.com

FLOUR POWER RULES BYCULLA

IT'S POPULAR COUSIN MAY SIT IN BANDRA, BUT THE ORIGINAL AMERICAN EXPRESS BAKERY AT BYCULLA'S CLARE ROAD IS PACKED WITH NOSTALGIA, HONEY-GLAZED PASTRIES AND MOST GOODIES UNDER 100 BUCKS



An AEB bread advertisement from the '30s

FIONA FERNANDEZ
fiona.fernandez@mid-day.com

It's like walking straight into a Charles Dickens novel. Wooden cupboards, marble-topped tables, the whiff of freshly baked bread straight from grandma's time. You can almost smell the sepia tinged vibe as you step into American Express Bakery (AEB) in Byculla. It's popular twin in Bandra usually gets more bandwidth, thanks to its vantage location and dedicated clientele. The main workshop and office stand on Clare Road though, and house a quaint café and the bakery. Its familiar outer façade, straight out of a '50s Art Deco building with the tagline "We Knead...Your Needs", has remained unchanged for decades, etched into the streetscape on this the bustling road.

THE GLORY DAYS

Set up in 1922, the bakery primarily made all kinds of bread, moving later to biscuits, pastries and catering for Christian weddings. Today, their bread menu runs into a mind-boggling 23 varieties. "In those days we had outlets at Grant Road, Colaba, Cumballa Hill, Santacruz and Byculla. The Bandra branch opened much later, in 1955. Then came the era of rationing and some of our branches had to shut down," reminisces Yvan Carvalho, a fourth generation member of the Carvalho family that's been running the bakery since the 1920s. Today, they remain one of the last significant Goan family-run businesses



The familiar outer facade of American Express Bakery. PICS / BIPIN KOKATE

in Mumbai. Quiz him about the origins of their bakery and he hesitantly speaks of a Parsi historian who came up with a claim that they supplied bread to ships touching the city's harbour from the east and west.

WHAT TO PICK WHEN HUNGRY

Step into the bakery and its wooden displays house the day's freshest products, ranging from trademark Plum Cakes (Rs 180, ½ kg) to the signature favourites — Macaroon Biscuits (Rs 85) and Wine Biscuits (Rs 50). If you are looking for a generous snack, plumb for the Chicken and Mutton Pattice (Rs 18 each) or Cheese Croissant (Rs 20 each). Their sandwiches are equally appetising — from the Garlic Roast Sandwich (Rs 35) and Hawaiian Sandwich (Rs 35) to Spinach & Mushroom Tarts (Rs 30). Sweet rushes can be satiated with the truly original Hungarian Coffee Cake (Rs 35), Lemon Pie (Rs 35) and divine tea cakes (Coconut, Apple Cinnamon).

If you manage to distract yourself from the culinary temptations, the walls sport frames of newspa-



Macaroons and wine biscuits are its signature products

per clippings from as early as 1939, carrying advertisements of AEB's bread and their famous catering services. What speaks volumes about this bakery credibility and high standards against the odds is that except for its cakes and bulk orders, not a single item on its menu crosses the hundred-rupee mark. Working ceaselessly is their staff of 30 who supply bread to several city hospitals, schools, hotels, and hip coffee shops like Mocha. The bread delivery begins as early as 3 am.

SHELF LIFE MATTERS

So, how do they manage to stay afloat? "We increased our prices in 2009, after two years. Locally available ingredients are sourced and that keeps affordability intact," adds Yvan's brother, Emil. Unwilling to jump the bandwagon with the recent price rise, they prefer to tide out this phase and are positive their customers will carry them through. "We also keep wastage to a minimum. We produce to an order and always ensure that we pass on the shelf life to our customer." As it turns out, shelf life is sacrosanct with the Carvalhos. They believe that if the processes followed are correct, it automatically ensures a good shelf life, without the need for additives.

FRESH OFF THE OVEN

Back in the early 1990s, AEB were the first to introduce the Hungarian Coffee Cake and Lemon Pie. "This was much before coffee shops hit on the idea," adds



Moistening a pastry before it's set in the oven

Yvan, with a glint of pride. "Today, people have travelled across the world and turned demanding. We've had to innovate to calorie conscious tastes as well. Whole Wheat Crackers (Rs 50), Multigrain Crackers (Rs 75) and Biscotti (Rs 85) are huge draws." According to Carvalho brothers, barely 10% of their products clash with other bakeries. They prefer to keep it simple, stay away from price wars and concentrate on creating their identity. Balancing the two worlds works for their recipes too. While their bread recipes haven't changed, their pastries, cakes and biscuits undergo the churn whenever necessary.

AT: AEB House, 664 Clare Road (Mirza Ghalib Marg), Byculla. Call: 23084441; also Hill Road, Bandra. Call: 26422857.

TOP 5 TO DO TODAY

NIGHT OUT > MIC TEST YOUR VOICE THIS MONDAY



Here's your chance to let your voice take over the mic. Starting today, Zenzi Mills presents Karaoke Nights every Monday.

AT Zenzi Mills, Todi Mills, Parel (W).
CALL 43455455

FILM > WATCH WORLD CLASS DOCUMENTARIES IN MUMBAI



Catch the best from India and the world at the 11th Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation Films.

LOG ON www.miffindia.in
AT NCPA, Mumbai.

SHOP > SAY CHEERS WITH ROSE, THIS VALENTINE'S DAY



As part of the season of love, what better time than now to clink glasses and celebrate February 14 with some help from Four Seasons' Blush gift pack, at Rs 425.

AT Leading supermart and wine stores.

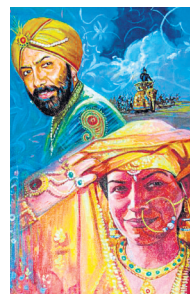
WKSHOP > MAKE THE RIGHT MOVES ON THE DANCEFLOOR



Get 20% off on Baile-de-Salon's Valentine's offer for couples keen on learning Salsa and Ballroom.

AT Colaba, Napean Sea Road, Bandra, Lower Parel, Powai.
CALL 970210006

ART > BRING OUT YOUR FILMI AVATAR ON A BOLLYWOOD POSTER



Valentine's Day isn't too far away. What better way to proclaim your love than by customising your own faces into a handpainted film poster.

LOG ON www.hippy.in
CALL 8080822022