

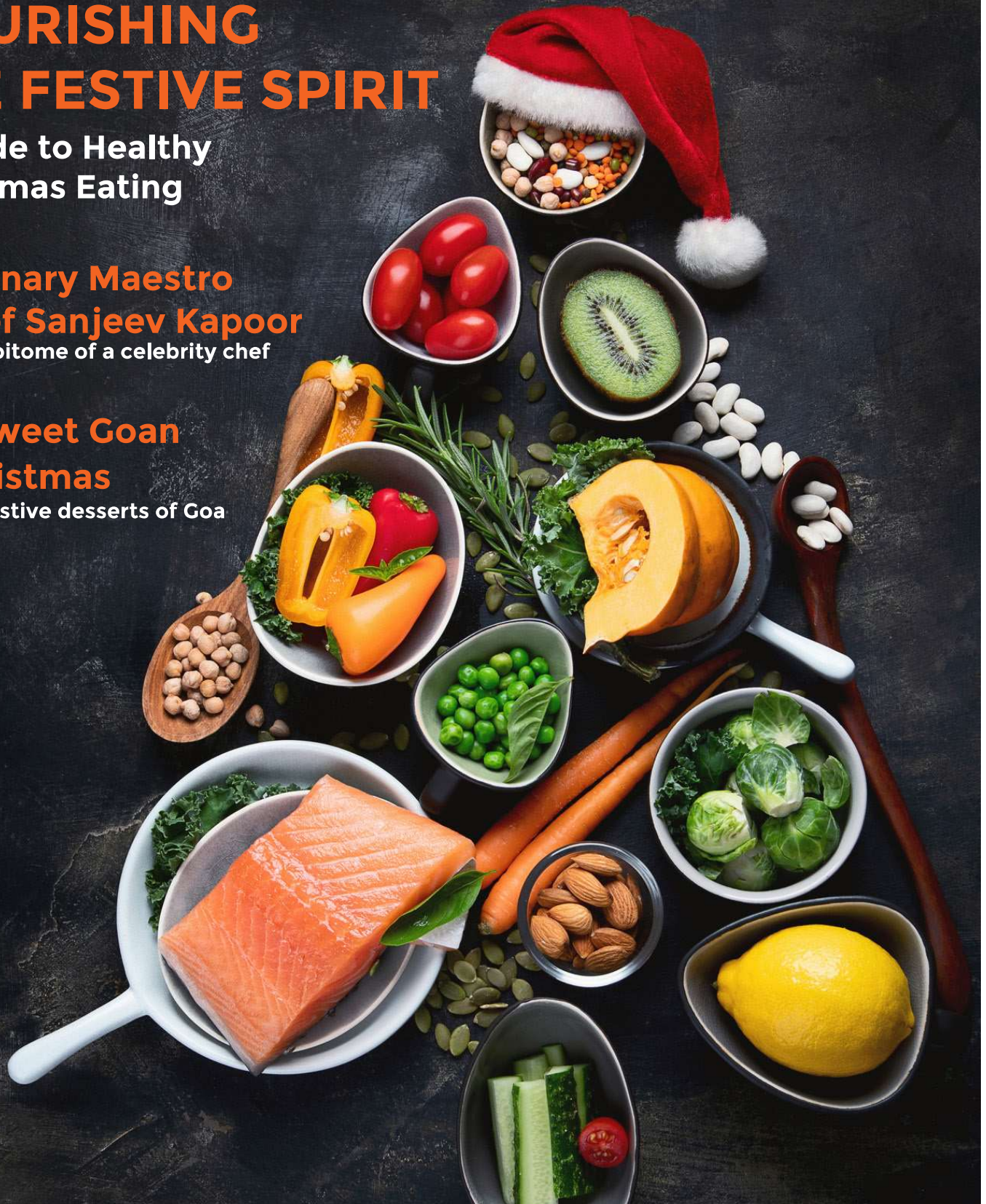
CEIA

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NOURISHING THE FESTIVE SPIRIT

A Guide to Healthy
Christmas Eating

- ◆ **Culinary Maestro**
Chef Sanjeev Kapoor
The epitome of a celebrity chef
- ◆ **A Sweet Goan**
Christmas
The festive desserts of Goa



A SWEET GOAN CHRISTMAS

The festive desserts of Goa

By Bindu Gopal Rao



Come December and the cheer in the air is palpable. After all it is the month of Christmas, and the festivities are never complete without desserts. And in Goa, it is not just about the Christmas pudding and plum cake. The state has several unique desserts that are bound to satiate your sweet tooth in more ways than one. Here is a list of our top five picks for some unusual Goan desserts that you must try this Christmas.

Snowball Cookie

Snowballs are cookies that are made all over the world during Christmas. Russian, Mexican, and Italian cuisines all have a variant of these little beauties. It is thought that they travelled to Goa through the Portuguese. Like all the food that travels, these too adapted to the culture of the region. In Kerala they are made with cashews. “In Goa they are made without nuts and ghee is the preferred fat. A standard recipe has a few simple ingredients available in most Indian kitchens; flour, icing sugar, ghee, or butter and almond or vanilla extract. They look like snowdrops as they are dusted in icing sugar from where they get their name and a festive Christmas identity. A lot of Christmas gift hampers have them as they keep well in the fridge for a few days. They are very easy to make, and everyone can try them at home. You can decorate with anything you fancy, chocolate drops, glazed cherries or even add desiccated coconut powder in the mix,” says *Jeneva Talwar*, Chef and Owner, *Café LaDiDa*, Goa.

Guava Cheese

Perad or Perada or simply Guava Cheese as some know it as, is linked to the Portuguese being here in Goa. This sweet is seen across most Portuguese colonies. In Portuguese, Guava is known as Goiaba and this preparation there is called Goia bada. “In Goa, we probably called it Perada from Poru. The pink guavas were used to make the



Chef Jeneva Talwar, Café LaDiDa





Oliver Fernandes, The Goan Kitchen.

sweet and thus the colour that also attracts one to this sweet. Goans love local tropical fruit flavours like jackfruit, cashews, bananas, and guavas. So goiabada brought in by the Portuguese was a quick favourite. In addition to coconut trees, one would find guava trees all over. So, this was a widely adopted sweet. This is a staple in the Christmas sweet platter (consuada) as the fruit is also available as a winter harvest during that time. It takes skill to pull off a good perada as it could become hard and chewy if left on the flame too long,” says *Oliver Fernandes, Co-founder, The Goan Kitchen.*



Bebinca

Bebinca is one of Goa’s most unique desserts and it was invented by nuns, locally at a convent in Old Goa. It is a textural and flavoursome marvel that involves baking the sweet dish, one layer at a time. Given that it needs a minimum of seven layers, it can be a laborious - albeit delicious - endeavour. “This is a dessert that tests a cook’s skill as well as their patience, because it is labour-intensive; and the best results are achieved when you’re making it for people that you care for. At Christmas time, people from the Goan diaspora tend to come back home from all corners of the world, and this sweet is often undertaken

as a family project, which automatically makes it so much more meaningful. Bebinca is the only Goan dessert to have a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, and for this reason and all the others above, I believe that it is rightfully referred to as the Queen of Goan Desserts,” says *Balaji Srinivasan, Executive Chef, Taj Cidade de Goa Heritage, Goa.*



Chef Balaji Srinivasan, Taj Cidade de Goa

Kulkuls or Kalkals

Deeply rooted in the state’s rich cultural and culinary heritage, the word ‘Kalkal’ is derived from the local language of Goa, Konkani and is an integral part of Christmas celebrations in

the region. Believed to have been adapted from traditional Portuguese sweets showcasing the blending of colonial influence. “While Portuguese are well known for their lavish festive treats especially during Christmas, kalkals with their intricate shapes and sweet flavours are likely to have evolved as a local variation adapting to the available ingredients and liked by the local palate. Typically consisting of locally available ingredients like flour, sugar and eggs, the use of coconut milk that is a staple in Goan cuisine to give a distinct regional touch to these sweets. One could describe this as a culinary fusion combining local spices and ingredients with global influences of all the erstwhile Portuguese colonies like Macau, East Timor, Angola, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique, and Brazil, culminating into a traditional sweet for celebrations. Families often come together to prepare these sweets, passing down recipes through generations and preserving the cultural and culinary legacy associated with Christmas in Goa,” says *Chef Rohan Kundaikar, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa.*



Chef Rohan Kundaikar, Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Goa.

