

(Left) Founders Nitin Vishwas and Rohan Rehani;  
(Bottom) Rehani with beekeeper Akshay Borse at Gorus Farms



# Show me the honey

As India's first meadery bags an honour at an international beer challenge, its makers tell us why the world's oldest tippie is having its moment

**ANJU MASKERI**

THIS year, when the team behind Moonshine Meadery sent their entries to the European Beer Challenge, they knew it would be a big deal if they won. Launched in 2018, the brand is India's first meadery based out of Pirangut, Pune. "The folks who grade us are among the biggest buyers, importers, distributors, retailers and in some cases, even manufacturers in Europe. Winning anything here is really about the recognition that an Indian brand, in a new category, can make a splash on the world stage,"

Mead is made by fermenting honey with water. It is sometimes flavoured with fruit, spices, grain, or hops. **PIC COURTESY/TANYA THOMAS &AROONABHA GHOSE**

says co-founder Rohan Rehani.

Moonshine returned with three awards: Double Gold for their grilled pineapple mead, a Gold for their project x mead and a bronze for their popular guava chilli mead in the meads category at an event held in London this April. Incidentally, it's only the second alcobev brand from India, after Bira, to win at this challenge.

Mead, also known as honey wine, is believed to be the world's oldest alcoholic libation, historically consumed by a rather diverse audience, ranging from humble working folk and Vikings to royalty. Although of-

ten mistaken for beer, given that both are brewed and fermented, this drink holds its own place.

The word mead, explains co-founder Nitin Vishwas, comes from the Indo Latin word 'medu', which is derived from the Sanskrit word 'madhu'. "Mead is essentially honey, water, yeast, mixed in a certain proportion and fermented under controlled temperatures. Fruit and spices are added to enhance the taste. Meads can exist with as low as 3.5 per cent abv [alcohol by volume]; one can also push a mead upto 12-13 per cent abv. While the main process greatly resembles wine making, when one makes meads with less than 8 per cent abv, the fruit and spice infusions resemble that of craft beer."

Moonshine's grilled pineapple

and guava chilli have been two of their bestselling small batch meads, or what they call MeadLABs. The intention behind these is to use only seasonal produce. "We use a mix of pink and white guava and Naga bhut jolokia chillies for the guava chilli mead, and pineapples grilled over coal and aged on oak chips for the grilled pineapple. The effort put into crafting these styles comes through in how delicious they are."

This writer took a shine to the grilled pineapple mead (₹199), made using multifloral honey and spiced rum-soaked pineapples. It's smoky, robust and refreshing at the same time. Project x is prepared using single origin honey. "Towards

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**TO ORDER:**  
moonshine  
meadery.com

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Founders Sangita Kathiwada and Kavitha Mantha

## A little more with less

A design and culture entrepreneur and a sustainability advocate come together to offer Mumbaiers a food line focused on mindful living

**CYNERA RODRICKS**

AS the Coronavirus pandemic sweeps the world, and has grown into a global threat to life, there cannot be a better time to turn attention to eating healthy. On cue, design and culture entrepreneur Sangita Kathiwada, and Kavitha Mantha, chef and slow food and sustainability advocate, founded Sava.

Housed in the same location as Kathiwada's fashion store, Mélange, Sava offers food grains, flours, spices, and nuts that are all local, naturally grown, ethically sourced, and packaged responsibly. The range also includes sauces, dips,

crackers, salad, cake, and breads, all made by Mantha. In Hindi, the term sava means one-and-a-quarter, and reflects their intent of "doing a little bit more".

Kathiwada says, "Kavitha and I share an ethos. Our values surrounding sustainable food and fashion clicked, allowing us to launch Sava in just two-and-a-half months. Most of the raw ingredients we use are sourced from Kavitha's farm in Hyderabad, and mine at Kathiwada in Gujarat."

In a glut of organic brands, the team believes their products stand apart because the food is not only consciously grown, but also offer consumers information about how to



Chilli oil, sundried tomatoes and green chillies from Sava

consume and preserve. The latter refers to extending the longevity of products, while maintaining the nutritional value and reducing waste. To slow down the food cycle, Mantha says she had replaced artificial preservatives with natural techniques such as solar drying, pickling and fermenting. "These techniques increase the durability of products. For example, when I solar dried a chikoo, its life extend-

ed from a week to three months and it became a perfect snack. Solar drying helps keep your fruit's nutritional value in tact. We went one step further, dried the chikoo some more and converted into flour. It has a slight sweet tinge and works exceptionally well as a gluten-free, naturally sweetened flour for baking."

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**TO ORDER:**  
savagoodness.  
com  
PRICE: ₹175  
to ₹1,225



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the latter half of 2020, we started sourcing our own honey from bee boxes across the country and made this batch of Project X with a harvest of Sidr honey," says Vishwas. The remaining honey is sold directly through their new vertical, Moonshine Honey Project. Glugging the aromatic guava chilli took us back to school days, when we'd bite into the 'peru' sprinkled with chilli powder by the sidewalk. Despite the spicy note, it's pleasantly light.

The brand has been consistently experimenting with ingredients, although they may not have struck gold with all. "We have made standalone flavours using peanut butter jelly, hibiscus, beetroot and even bitter gourd. We generally run a lot of these via the tap route [draft] at events [pre-COVID] to check consumer feedback." If they think it's too niche, they avoid going the bottle route. "However, the other filter is more technical—since we use 100 per cent real fruits and spices, some meads start to break down over time. Hence, it's typically risky bottling it as there is no control on consumption timelines and therefore, quality," explains Vishwas.

Three years ago when they launched the brand, there was no mead market in the whole of Asia to speak of, observes Rehani. "It's only in the last three years that two meaderies have launched in Singapore, one in Thailand and a few in

**Interestingly, the old world tippie globally earned a reputation of the 'new generation of hipster drinker', when HBO's hit drama series Game Of Thrones kicked off its sixth season in 2016. Rehani prefers to call this breed of drinkers the early movers**



The Moonshine Honey Project Beebox at Gorus Farms, Pune. Towards the latter half of 2020, the brand started sourcing their own honey from bee boxes across the country and made a batch of Project X with a harvest of Sidr honey

China. In India, there's one coming up in Chandigarh, one in Bengaluru and hopefully a few more in Maharashtra. The bottom line is that there is an active market in India for flavourful RTDs [read-to-drink] and mead is a great option within this space."

Interestingly, the old world tippie globally earned a reputation among the 'new generation of hipster drinker', when HBO's hit drama series Game Of Thrones kicked off its sixth season in 2016. Rehani prefers to call this breed of drinkers the early movers. "This is the group which is always looking for the next new thing in the market and is critical to the consumer ecosystem. The feedback from them is important since most often, it's candid and honest." Their audience has evolved and is no longer restricted to age groups, he adds. "Anyone who is looking for taste over intoxication, and a non-bitter drinking experience picks up Moonshine. The fact that it's carbonated helps add to the drinking experience. That it's also gluten-free and has antioxidant properties makes the choice easier."

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Sunday Sava Market at Altamont Road

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Everyone wants to eat healthy, but doesn't always know how. They recently organised a virtual cooking session with 25 consumers, who were keen to be conscious about buying and cooking. They learnt how to make two vegan meals—jowar-base pizza and millet salad.

Sava's central kitchen at Poch-

khanwala Road allows the team to work with local, seasonal produce where fresh, unique products are created on a regular basis.

The pandemic, says Katiwada, isn't a factor they considered when deciding to launch. "It's not a corporation, it's a passion project, an attempt to see if we can do more with less."

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# Dham laga ke

Inspired by the rich cuisine of Kangra and other ancient Indian kingdoms, this Mumbai chef wants you to eat like the royals



Begum Shah Jahan's Bhopali rezala has a distinct flavour of fresh coriander lending a tangy and fresh taste to the curry, traditionally garnished with a boiled egg



## ANJU MASKERI

WITH the explosion of delivery kitchens in the pandemic, chef and restaurant consultant Amit Puri knew he'd need a standout concept to get noticed. "We wanted to serve the popular kebabs and curries, but also introduce patrons to flavours otherwise not easily found on conventional restaurant menus," he says. In April, Puri teamed up with a few friends to launch The Blue Tiffin.

The rich blue logo signifies royalty, wealth and reliability, while the tiffin—delivered in eco-friendly packaging—denotes comfort. From recipes that hark back to the Maratha rule in Tanjore to those exclusive to the Kangra royal family, considered to be the world's oldest surviving royal family with Rajput roots, the menu is a culinary mosaic. The research and food trials went on for seven months, recalls Puri.

There's a theory that the popular South Indian sambar was invented by the Marathas of Tanjore when Maharashtrian cooks, while preparing amti, replaced moong dal with tur and used tamarind instead of kokum

Amit Puri

"I gleaned inspiration from the royal food that I had a chance to sample during my travels to Rajasthan, Indore, Chennai, Lucknow, Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir. To make sure it's authentic, I pored over culinary books by historians and a lot of online literature." The dishes that made the cut were those that had a distinct flavour profile. The Kangra boondi ka khatta (₹280), for instance, is a famous mildly-sour, yoghurt-based curry from Himachal Pradesh. "Kangra royal food is homely and intense. Brahmin cooks called bawarchis were the initial innovators of the food in the Kangra region and were commissioned

to cook on special occasions." Here, the fatty combination of ghee, khoya and curd is balanced with khatta, a sweet and sour sauce made with imli, jaggery and mango powder. "In fact, I follow my mother-in-law's recipe. I have had the boondi ka khatta so many times at home, but it was only post research that I learnt about the royal roots of the recipe."

According to Puri, Himachali cuisine, known as Dham, is in many ways similar to the multi-course Kashmiri wazwan. The star preparation of the dham is usually Madra, which is a smaller variety of rajma cooked in yogurt and sometimes, mustard oil, on a low flame in a thick brass pot called charoti. In order to make it diverse and inclusive, Puri has tried to bring in elements from various parts of the Indian subcontinent. The recipes in the Maratha Kingdom of Tanjore or Thanjavur were highly influenced by ingredients found locally in Tamil Nadu, he tells us. "After the end of Chola rule in Tanjore, the city in Tamil Nadu was taken over by the Marathas for close to two centuries. There's a theory that the popular South Indian sambar was invented by the Marathas of Tanjore when Maharashtrian cooks, while preparing amti, replaced moong dal with tur dal and used tamarind for sourness instead of kokum. It continues that the dish got its name from Sambhaji, the Maratha emperor."

The menu also features the Bhopali Razala (₹420), a creamy chickpea curry introduced to the state by the last nawab of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah. "For some reason, knowledge of the Rezala is limited to West Bengal. Rezala is a rich curry of Turkish and Persian origin. The thick, white gravy is made with cashew and cream that has a few variations across different cities, the most common being the Bengali Rezala. However, Begum Shah Jahan's Bhopali Rezala has a

## Kangra boondi ka khatta

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp besan
- 2 cups water
- 2 tbsp ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp mustard seeds
- 1 sprig curry leaves
- ¼ tsp Fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp ginger chopped
- ½ tsp asafoetida
- ½ tsp red chili powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tbsp coriander powder
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- 3 tsp tamarind pulp
- 3 tsp jaggery, chopped
- ½ cup khara boondi

### Final tadka

- 2 tsp ghee
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- ½ tsp whole red chilli

### METHOD

Mix the gram flour and water in a bowl and keep aside. Heat ghee in a pan over medium flame. Add cumin seeds and mustard seeds and curry leaves. Allow them to splutter. Add fenugreek seeds, ginger and asafoetida to the pan. Add the dry masalas and mix well. Make sure not to burn the masalas. Add in the gram flour slurry in the pan and mix well. Add the tamarind pulp and jaggery and cook for a couple of minutes till the curry thickens. Meanwhile, place boondi in a serving bowl and keep aside. Transfer the curry to the serving bowl consisting boondi. For tempering, heat ghee in another pan. Add cumin seeds and allow to splutter. Add in the red chilli and mix well. Pour the tempering on top and serve with white rice.



distinct flavour of fresh coriander lending a tangy and fresh flavour to the curry that is traditionally garnished with a boiled egg." Just because the dishes are royal, doesn't mean they are complicated. The Rajasthani jungle maas (₹340), for instance, is an easy preparation with just five ingredients: ghee, garlic, chilli, salt and mutton. "It is such a wonderful recipe, perhaps too simple to be on a commercial menu. I wanted to retain the [authenticity] of the preparation and I now serve it in the form of a samosa. It has been appreciated by customers."

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