

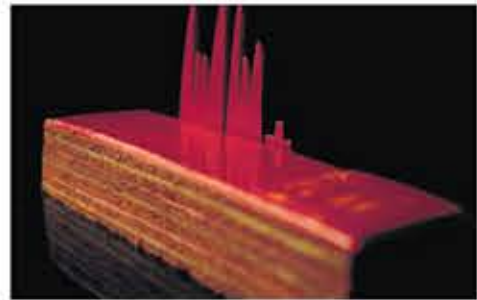
« TRIED & TESTED FOOD REVIEW

A PLAY ON DESSERTS

Averse to fruits and nuts in most sweet treats, Rhea Dhanboora found herself an unlikely fan of the unconventional ingredients in SugarPlay's out-of-the-box desserts. Take a look at what the delivery-only brand has to offer

Tasting food is serious business, or at least that's what I've learned over what has been close to a decade sampling all the flavours that Mumbai has welcomed with open arms. If you spend enough time on the task, you can train your palate to identify whether dishes are good or bad, al dente or raw, and whether your soup has packet purees or the real deal. And, while I can't claim to have a finely-honed palate (or even honed enough to pass the most basic litmus test for chefs), it's hard to miss a mouthful of mustard in your mousse or a dash of dill in your dessert.

No, these aren't reviewing nightmares or Rachel-Green-esque mistakes from a FRIENDS episode. They're signatures and specials, inspired by avant-garde French styles. Newly launched SugarPlay promises to un-complicate your desserts, but what's more complicated than green pea custard with lime mousse? Nothing, if you're willing to put pre-conceived notions to bed and dig in! Here's what I tried, and why you should too.



THE KONKAN OPERA ₹230

The only reason the Konkani Opera may not have scored full marks was because it was stiffer and more jelly-like than the rest of the desserts I tried. It's difficult to get a dessert to hold its shape, but most of the items on SugarPlay's menu manage that without the stodgy, gelatin-texture that ruins the taste. The chocolate jaconde, as in most traditional opera cakes, was subtly flavoured and the many-layered cake was sandwiched with (thin) equally restrained layers of kokum and honey creameux. A little more kokum wouldn't hurt and you can barely taste the honey. But, while the pudding filling did well, I would have preferred a bouncier sponge.

SERENDIPITY ₹180

Éclairs have been a guilty indulgence since I was a child, but I've never been able to master making the perfect choux. So, unless it's soggy, chewy or dry, I'm more impressed by the casing than the (usually disappointing) mousse inside. This particular religieuse casing stood its ground (it's not easy to cut into if you've just taken it out of the fridge) and,



PARADOX ₹230

The true test of your mettle as a dessert chef could very well be the ability to whip up a good pannacotta and here, SugarPlay does well, with a good balance of cream and gelatin. You're not affronted by the overpowering flavour of coconut (when a dessert tastes or smells like a bottle of hair oil, you've lost me), but I wasn't too impressed. With the pineapple compote, chocolate crumble, hazelnuts... there's a little too much going on with this one. I found



ORIGINAL SIN ₹230

This egg-free dessert is perfect for those who don't like experimenting. If you pick chocolate over everything else and can get past the idea of a clove ganache — you won't know it's clove unless you read the description, since it's so wonderfully balanced with the Belgian Dark Chocolate — this one is for you. Even with the cocoa dusting, it's not the most spectacular tart I've ever tasted (it's a little too thick), but the tawny caramel topping is worth fighting over — the sea salt isn't too salty and the caramel not sickly sweet.



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myself digging in past the top layer to enjoy the pannacotta base instead.

A BEAUTIFUL MESS ₹260

The last time I had a good béchamel, it was in a salmon dish with asparagus and capers on the side. So finding the familiar taste in a spoonful of mousse was... strange, to say the least. Once you've wrapped your head around the common French sauce being sandwiched comfortably in your dessert, this could be an easy favourite. As horrible as it sounds, the mustard actually complements the raspberry perfectly and while I usually like a harmonious berry and dark chocolate combination, the white chocolate mousse adds a pleasant sweetness to the entire dessert. The gelatinous glaze and chocolate garnish add to the sweet-sour combination that few manage to get in such dreamy accord.



THE PAINKILLER ₹260

One of the only items where every ingredient seemed quintessentially dessert-friendly, this pretty yellow sphere sits comfortably on a mint biscuit. The infusion of the bay leaf (which I've found is also brilliant in lemon custard) prevents the passion fruit mousse from being too acetic and while you can't taste the dash of vodka, I'm sure the clear spirit lifted the flavours. It could have done without the raisin

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

SugarPlay's desserts are only available for delivery, but they pack, prepare and parcel everything so you feel like you're at a gourmet kitchen when you dig in. When they say they're unconventional, they really mean it and their slightly stiff prices are actually good value for what they offer. Run by Chef Amit Mehta (trained at Le Cordon Bleu London) and Bharti Mehta (as director), the treats are available at www.sugarplay.in. They also serve macarons, truffles and tea cakes, which we're going to try next!

PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

I'm not a fan of gelatin, especially in store-bought desserts. From the lumpy texture and sticky glaze to mouthfuls of gelatinous mousse, an incorrect balance of the ingredient and you're left with dessert that looks delicious but tastes like boiled rubber. So when I saw the visual delights (individually placed on black boards), I was worried about the usual dessert faux pas. Then there was the fact that every description includes at least one savoury food item — from green peas to mustard. SugarPlay, however, believes all ingredients (a refreshing change from the 'exotic' and 'imported' tags), including local favourites and dinner specials, can find a place in good dessert. And for all my misgivings, they seem to have succeeded in showing us how pretty well.

insert; unlike the mustard in A Beautiful Mess, this didn't delight as much, but it helps sweeten the dessert without any sickly saccharine flavours. If you avoid passion fruit based treats because they're often too sour, or sweetened beyond recognition, this is the dessert to turn to.

LIMEWIRE ₹260

If there were ever a list of after-dinner treats that managed to use features of your entree without offending your sweet tooth, this would come in at a close second to A Beautiful Mess. Your palate is treated here to a soft hint of lime, a surprise bite of jelly-like blueberry, a tart base (better than the chocolate) and... wait, does that taste like green peas? We've been on board with avocado desserts for ages, so this shouldn't surprise anyone. With a well-masked (you won't even know it's there) dash of dill in harmony with the custard, you wouldn't know unless you were really looking. This takes an ingredient that most people don't even like in their meals, and places it in symphony with a lime mousse, in a tart that truly stands out.



« CHECK IT OUT ART EXHIBITIONS AT THE LEELA HOTEL

RELAXOGRAPHS — A COLLECTION OF GRAPHIC PAINTINGS

Art is the oldest medium of expression, and there is no better way for an artist to voice their ideas than through an exhibition of work. Relaxographs by Tapan Madkikar speaks volumes through a personal depiction of the world on canvas. Tapan paints a clear picture of tranquillity, serenity and peace — which is rare to find in today's world. The series of four images all represent nature at four different times of the day, from dawn to dusk. He uses dominating prints and colours, with each hue carefully representing a time of the day. With his knack for excellent visual representation and exceptional calibre, Tapan manages to relax you with the striking pieces from the collection.

When Up to January 22, from noon to 8pm
Where The Leela Hotel, Andheri Kurla Road, Sahar, Andheri (e)
Contact 9321360006/ 9820352864



Pictures for representation purposes only

« CHECK IT OUT AN EGG HAUNT IN ANDHERI

HOW EGGS-CELLENT

It may not even be close to Easter, but if you're already on the prowl for eggs, we've got just the thing for you. Egg enthusiasts and those who are hit by the late night munchies are going to love this one. AndaMental, a quick service restaurant that specialises in serving a variety of egg dishes, is now open! And, they've even got options for those who aren't egg eaters. Apart from the special egg creations, the space also offers lip-smacking vegetarian food. The best part is that it's open till the wee hours of the morning — 3.30am to be specific. So, head over to satiate your late night hunger pangs or a sudden egg craving at this quirky new space.



When Ongoing, 11am to 3.30am
Where A-4, New Sunder Park CHS, Jeevan Nagar, near Pizza Express, Andheri (w)
Contact 9022447755



« CHECK IT OUT BEERS AT ₹17 AT REUNION BAR & KITCHEN

CHEAP BEER, GOOD TIMES

Although there are still at least ten days to go before it begins to feel like the end of the month, it's a good idea to pretend it's here already — at least for your wallet! Simply head over to Reunion Bar & Kitchen at Shivaji Park to enjoy a beer at just ₹17! You will have to hurry though, because although the

offer is on up to the end of the month, it will only be valid till stocks last.
When Up to January 25, from noon to 6.30pm
Where 204, Ground Floor, Sai Niwas, L J Road, Near City Light, Dadar Shivaji Park
Contact 9892537222



Pictures for representation purposes only

« CHECK IT OUT CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL AT CORONA GARDEN

BEER FOR A CAUSE

Looking to unwind in a magical space, with some flavourful beer? Head to Corona Garden for a craft beer festival that will lighten your mood and melt away any stress you're feeling about entering the new year. Powered by WowTables, this craft beer festival has everything you would expect of a chilled out evening — beer from local breweries including The White Owl, Gateway Brewing Co., Bira and Brewbot, as well as live music by young, talented bands.

There's also scrumptious food that includes Mexican delicacies, pizzas, hot dogs, burgers, kebabs and desserts. The festival is a little different from what you may be accustomed to, as the proceeds from the day will be used towards supporting grassroots education, health and community development programs. Radhika Gulati, director of Secure Giving Events, the organisers of the craft beer festival, says, "We wanted to find a way to incorporate an

enjoyable, relaxed experience with the spirit of giving. Craft beers are really taking off and this is a great way for people to come enjoy them as we raise funds for charity." Tickets cost ₹1,200 at the venue, or you can book online via WowTables for ₹1,000. The entry fee covers three beers or sangrias.
When January 21, from noon onwards Where Corona Garden, St. John Baptist Road, Bandra (w)
Contact 9821049098