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Saturday March 30, 2024

Goan legacy of Karachi: Midas magic of Misquita Bakery

MENIN RODRIGUES THE GOAN | TORONTO

very year, all the hot cross buns baked at the legendary JC Misquita Bakery in Karachi turn into gold for the owners! There is something providential, magical, or even mystical that happens at the bakery; year after year on Good Friday. I have been a witness to this gold rush for nearly three decades.

For curiosity, I have estimated sales figures and they seem to be quite mindboggling. It is difficult to fathom what makes this observable fact so booming every year on Good Friday. Is it taste, quality, ingredients, aroma, the tradition of eating hot-cross buns on a day of fasting, or simply an infatuation?

THE HISTORY

The original JC Misquita Bakery, a small outlet set up by a Goan, Joseph Cajetan Misquita, opened doors on Frere Street Saddar (Dr Daud Pota Road) in 1858, almost 166 years ago. It is believed JC Misquita owned tens of properties in Karachi by the middle of the 20th century. His son Manuel Misquita served as the Mayor of Karachi from 1946-47. The Misquita wealth is altogether another story but the success of Misquita Bakery to this day is a story I can throw some light on.

Photo Credit: Benny Vaz



Customers queue up outside the JC Misquita Bakery in Karachi.

on the corner plot where Misquita Bakery stood were demolished, the second owners moved the business to a lane opposite the Bohra Jamatkhana, off Mansfield Street (now Syedna Burhanuddin Road); a stone's throw from St. Patrick's Cathedral!

After a couple of years,

THE CONNECT

The annual experience at JC Misquita's is like a pre-dawn picnic! You get to meet and interact with people whom you've not met in years, some forgotten friends and neighbours, early risers, storytellers, taparu uncles and made-over aunties, teachers, bikers, showmen, sleepy 'susegad' people, and some funny folks. Indeed, quite a colourful community, all in the quest for, not just buns but the latest gossip – Goan to the core!

THE BUSINESS

Now here is an estimation of conservative figures. The average number of customers served per hour was 8, each customer was served with an average number of 4 packets (each package containing 12 buns) that is 48 buns per customer. That makes it 1,536 buns in one hour!

The sale starts at 5 am and give or take, the sale counter is operative for an average of 10 hours, that figure comes to 15,360 buns on one day and 30,720 buns on 2 days of sale (Holy Thursday and Good Friday). Buns are also sold before and after these two days.

The cost of each bun this year is Pakistan Rupees 62, so the total business (PKR 62 x 30,720 buns) would be Pakistan Rupees 19,04,640 for two days. Not bad for 2 days of work! Incidentally, this hypothetical figure does not include Online Sales and another large quantity that is picked up by the old 'Roti Walas' on bicycles who go door to door for sales of confectionery to their decades-old customers. Please don't take my word for these figures; I may be completely off track! Make your guesses. Hot Cross buns are sold in several bakeries throughout the city on these two days of Lent but the Hot Cross buns from the Misquita Bakery have a touch of gold!

Studentships at Oxford University in memory of Goan scientist



LUI GODINHO THE GOAN | LONDON

he Joseph Rufino Cordeiro Foundation in collaboration with the University of Oxford is inviting applications for summer research studentships 2024 in Sustainable Chemistry with accommodation at Worcester College. The Foundation in particular wants to encourage Goan or Indian students to apply. The Foundation was established by Mary Anne Cordeiro in December 2020 to honour the memory and legacy of her late father, Joseph Rufino Cordeiro, a Goan scientist and inventor, whose expertise in radio navigational aids and communication became recognised worldwide. Joseph Rufino Cordeiro invented a digital meteorological measurement system which was granted 2 patents in UK in 1983. His expertise in radio navigational aids and communication became recognised worldwide and his design skills were utilised in 27 international airports around the world. "We are ready for the 2024 Joseph Rufino Cordeiro Foundation Summer Research Studentships in Sustainable Chemistry (JRCF Studentships) for the second year since the programme was instituted last year. We have given much more time to candidates as the first deadline is not until April 19 and the deadline for shortlisted applications is May 24," said Mary Anne Cordeiro, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Foundation. "My father, Joseph Rufino Cordeiro (1924-2021), was a brilliant scientist/inventor and was proud of his Goan heritage manifested through his many philanthropic acts. In recognition of the importance of science to him, we inaugurated the programme of JRCF Studentships in collaboration with the Chemistry Department at the University of Oxford commencing in summer 2023." "Given our family origins, the Foundation is particularly keen to nurture Goan students and we want to encourage these students to apply for the JRCF Studentship sponsored by the Foundation." After the success of last year's JRCF Studentships, Mary Anne said the Foundation is looking to expand the 2024 programme to support up to five talented students with fully

funded research summer placements in sustainable chemistry at the University of Oxford.

"This offers them a rare opportunity to gain research experience at one of the most prestigious science departments in the world," said Mary Anne.

In 1967, the Misquitas gave away the bakery on contract to a friend. The bakery maintained its quality while catering to a mix of communities, Hindu, Parsi, Muslim, and Christian, and to every stratum of society, rich or poor, that lived around the shop.

The competition was tough in those days being in the neighbourhood of the big boys (bakers), PF Pereira, Boman Irani, Adam Sumar, Empress, Lawrence, and later United; but the bakery held its ground, its quality, mysticism, and magic!

Early in 2000 when the old shops

they sold the bakery and with it, its precious brand equity and heritage. The third owners took over and changed the name to "Al-Rehman Bakery" and to their surprise; started losing customers and business. Within a year or

so, they re-changed the name to "New JC Misquita Bakery" – and both business and customers were back!

THE DEMAND

One year, I left home with my nephew Brendon at 4.30 am (half an hour earlier than the previous year) and upon reaching Saddar, found 60 more people ahead of us, some came as ear-



Hot Cross buns from the JC Misquita Bakery in Karachi.

ly as 3 am! The shop was closed. When the counter opened at 5 am, our turn came 45 minutes later getting Token #59 at about 5.45 a.m. By the time our turn came at the pick-up counter, it was 7.15 am. I reached home at 7.25 and by 7.35, was enjoying the most delicious and piping hot-cross bun, ever! The early morning rush grows every year despite online booking and home delivery.

[The writer, a Toronto-based communications consultant, Karachi Goan *community/city historian and author*

Goans, Filipinos present play on Christ in Sharjah

THE GOAN | SHARJAH

ver 100 Goans and Filipinos came together to stage a play on 'The Glory and Passion of Christ journey of Sacrifice and Redemption' at St Michael's Church in Sharjah on March 20.

The play was presented under the guidance and blessing of the Spiritual Directors, Fr Denis Saldanha OFM Cap. (Asst. Parish Priest and Spiritual Director of Konkani Community) and Fr Hilario Kapitbahay OFM Cap. (Asst. Parish Priest and Spiritual Director of Filipino Community), along with the other priests in the parish.

The 70-minute play included performances by Goans and Filipinos of all ages, light and sound effects, music and dance, and video footage on the backdrop.

According to Xavier Azavedo, president of the St Michael's Sharjah Goan Community (SMSGC), the Goan community was privileged to have been called to be part of the play along with the Filipino community.



"The cast of over 100 Goan and Filipino actors and other support staff practiced for more than 50 days. Our own Goan, Lazio Fernandes, enacted Jesus beautifully," said Azavedo.

"The packed audience loved the play and many commented that they were mesmerised and could feel the love of the Lord. Indeed, this was the goal of the play. Many were in tears during the enaction of the Crucifixion."

"All this was possible only because of the wonderful team of Goans and Filipinos who worked behind the scene to ensure everything went on very well. There was a lot of hard work, but it was an excellent result."

Besides the acting, the Goans were also involved in various teams for recording/editing, make-up artiste, lights and sound, backstage, props, costumes, volunteers and coordination.

"The entire cast and crew worked very hard and their efforts were there for everyone to see. A special mention goes out to Quennie and Savio Braganza for the complete coordination, Agnelo and Retti Rodriques, Anthony Fernandes, Lineth Fernandes and Mary for the props which added realism to the play," acknowledged Azavedo. The entire play can be viewed on

YouTube at https://tinyurl.com/5yp3ypxe

"The 2024 JRCF Studentship will provide successful candidates with £16.60/hour for up to 35 hours/week (that is, up to £4,648, subject to any statutory deductions) for a defined period of up to 8 weeks in July and August. Up to five successful candidates will also be offered paidfor accommodation in Worcester College, Oxford, for up to 8 weeks," explained Mary Anne.

"The Foundation sponsors projects that nurture young talent in innovative scientific research and also encourages Goan/Indian students in those fields."

"The grants will offer the successful applicants an opportunity to experience postgraduate research at the University of Oxford, enable them to advance exciting research and inspire them to pursue postgraduate study and a career in Sustainable Chemistry."

"The grants will also improve their research and transferable skills and give them access to advice on further study and research careers." Mary Anne added.

The eligible applicants must be enrolled in an undergraduate degree in chemistry, demonstrate academic excellence and potential as well as be able to provide proof of right to work in the UK.

Details of the Joseph Rufino **Cordeiro Foundation Summer** Research Studentships in Sustainable Chemistry (JRCF Studentships) are available on the website (https://tinyurl.com/ sbr7vmnn) or by email (mac@ ircordeirofoundation.org)

Mary Anne said her father was a stalwart supporter of Saligao, and dutifully visited his family home there annually.

"He supported many local and international causes to promote fellow Goans. He was delighted to become president of the Saligao Association UK in 1977 and sponsor the Mae De Deus Feast in Saligao in May 1984. Everyone who knew him considered him to be a gentleman of great integrity, strong faith and deep convictions," she added.

Goan music, costumes, dance take centre stage in Qatar

Family Day 2024 at Our Lady of the Rosary Church Qatar

LUI GODINHO THE GOAN | DOHA

host of nationalities took part in the Family Day, the first of its kind organised recently by the Our Lady of Rosary Church Qatar at the **Religious Complex.**

The day-long programme saw people of various ages and from different nationalities showcasing their cultures and vibrant dresses in a riot of colours.

Performers from many cultures shared the beauty of their native music and dance; and costumes from many nations adorned the Community Cultural Parade. The richness of the diversity within the Parish Community was evident on show.





Photo Courtesy: Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Rosary Qatar

The event had something on offer for people of all ages to enjoy which they to the hilt amidst the sounds of music, laughter and children's squeals of joy.

Among the various communities and groups in the parish which were in full force at the event turned out to be the Goan community which took part in the cultural programmes and

the food stalls.

Ros Omelette, a Goan delicacy was a big hit and so were a few other dishes prepared and served at the Goan food stall at the family day. The Goan Poie made by Goan entrepreneur Jeronimo D'Souza at Jazz Café bakery gelled well with some of the Goan dishes, said people, who savoured the tasty Goan delicacies.

The Goan brass band played at the event and the members of the squad included, Carlos Fernandes (trumpet/saxophone), Morgan Viegas (guitar), Joshua Carlos (saxophone), Byron Carlos (bass Drum), Joshua Francis Murray (clarinet), John De Sa (crash cymbal), Martin Mascarenhas (Djembe), Zethan Rodrigues (snare drum) and Eleora Viegas (violin).

Musicians from other countries and Indian cities also performed at the event.

The stalls also offered hot and cold food and beverages, along with some sweet treats.

Games around the compound gave younger parishioners a safe place to climb and bounce throughout the day.

The festivities began with the opening ceremony by Fr Xavier D'Souza Parish Priest of the church, followed by the talent show, fancy dress competition, bingo in the morning and the evening, keeping busy parishioners of all ages.

More fun came the parishioner's way when they had to run around the ground in search of the perfect "selfie' needed to win the Treasure Hunt.

With the announcement of the winner's name of the Parish Raffle, there was more celebration all around as the evening progressed and the day ended with a beautiful closing ceremony.

The parishioners left the Religious Complex grounds with smiles on their faces and a sense of community in their hearts. This was a day of cele bration that left lasting memories for all who participated and there was so much joy.

With the resounding success of Family Day, parishioners are now hoping that it becomes an annual event for all to look forward to and enjoy for years to come.

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