

Everyone bites into 'Joynagarer moa'

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The GI logo of Joynagarer moa is a date palm tree.

The very name of the sweet rings a bell among all Bengalis across the spectrum, with or without a sweet tooth. It is a seasonal sweet and is available only in winter (November to January), when nolen gur — a form of jaggery available from date palm and the main ingredient of the sweet — is available in the districts of south Bengal.

The other ingredients are puffed rice, ghee, cardamom and pistachio.

"About 15,000 families and thousands more in and around Joynagar are directly and indirectly involved in the manufacture and trade of the snack, respectively," Ashok Kayal, an activist who was involved in fighting for the GI status for Joynagarer moa, told HT.

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However, there is still a hurdle to cross before the sweet can be marketed beyond its local and regional borders. It has a shelf life of four to five days at the most and efforts are on to tackle the problem. In fact, this issue of preservation and packaging and the technology needed to do it have become the new talking points for both the Trinamool and the SUCI.

Trinamool's Pratima Mondal,

the Lok Sabha MP from the area, said, "I did my best to ensure that this sweet of ours gets the GI tag. Now that it has been a success, the next step is preservation and packaging. Work is on and we hope to see some progress soon."

SUCI leaders, expectedly, contradicted the MP's claims. "Our party and our local MLA Tarun Naskar (a professor of Jadavpur University) led the movement for the GI status. Naskar also organized fairs and seminars to spread awareness about the matter. But the ruling party is trying to gloss it all over and claim credit," Bachchu Bose, a local SUCI leader, told HT.

Sources told HT that the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP) is experimenting with preserving and packaging the sweet. The target is to extend the moa's shelf life to 30 days.

POINTING

POSSESSION