

Morsels for Home

Summiting The Market

Food is one of the most important things in the world to me. Don't get me wrong, I love dal bhat, the ubiquitous national meal of Nepal, along with most of the culinary delights that one finds throughout this land. But I come from Europe.

By PAT KAUBA



My mother cheerfully jokes that the way to a man's heart is through his belly. I remembered that as I was lunching last weekend on a fine, mouth-watering selection of French and Italian cheeses on Italian bread topped with bright leaves of basil. I had just brought it home fresh from shopping. Ah, the luxury of it—fine breads and cheeses, made by good people, and fresh herbs and organic vegetables, pastas and pastries, jams and juices, and more, all available in Kathmandu from smiling vendors at one of the city's special weekly events: the Sunday Market at the Summit Hotel, Kupandol.

Food is one of the most important things in the world to me. Don't get me wrong, I love dal bhat, the ubiquitous national meal of Nepal, along with most of the culinary delights that one finds throughout this land. But I come from Europe. I was raised on European

food, sometimes I feel shadowy, dark undertones like an addict in withdrawal, going cold turkey if I don't get my 'hit'. I trained as a chef for five years, so I love food, all food; but good food above all, is most important!

And good food for fine cooking is available every Sunday at the Summit. There you'll find many of Kathmandu's expatriate community enjoying being tickled by these tasty delights.

They may not be fanatics like me, but I enjoyed watching just how much cheese some people will buy from Sandro Serafini (Italy) and Francoise Driard (France). The quantity of bread baskets sold by Barat Kafle (Nepal), and fresh organic vegetables, herbs and salad fixings sold by Bishnu Batas (Nepal) was astounding.

Kafle summed up the benefits of the market, saying, "I have never had to pay for advertising for my bakery." Bishnu Batas had much the same to say. They

have both been selling here since the market started over 17 years ago.

THE ROOT OF IT ALL

In the West, especially in Europe, the concept of the weekend market; on Saturday or Sunday, is not just a place to shop for tasty and wholesome foods—it is also a social event. If you look around on Sunday at the Summit, you'll see people greeting their friends and enjoying a chat over fresh coffee and sweets.

Supermarkets have distorted the ethics of good food. Daily life and the need for 'convenience' is taking priority, as we rush head-first from board meetings to working deadlines. It has taken its toll on quality produce for home and quality time with friends. Quick and easy oven meals are winning out. But weekend markets provide an alternative for those who wish to know and share the source of good food, to gauge its true quality and value, and support those who are

SNEAK PEEK INTO THE ORGANIC MARKET

STALL 1

Barat Kafle has the look about him of a man apart. And he is. He is a baker, whose day starts at half two or three in the morning. He's been at it for over 40 years. Though he's never left Nepal, he makes the finest Italian breads. He also speaks Italian. How is it possible, you ask; the answer lies with Rubiolo Battisto, another expat from the before time, an Italian who took Kafle under his wing from a young age. Perhaps he was missing the taste of home and decided to do something about it.

Kafle's stall is a world of tastes, from small rustic bread buns to multi-grain loaves. There are focaccia

bread and farmhouse loaves to delight the soul. He must also have a sweet tooth, for he also sells cookies, apple tarts, and croissants, both chocolate and plain. And pizzas and fresh ravioli. No wonder he has to get up so early. He also runs his small 'Secret Bakery', across from the British School in Jamsikhel. You'll have to ask around, for it's not called the Secret Bakery for nothing.

STALL 2

Run by the Summit Hotel, this stall provides acceptable coffees and teas, black or with milk, along with a range of fresh and tasty pastries, and some simple loaves of bread. A perfect stall really, if you like

to spend the morning lounging. The nearby tables are where you can meet friends for a few hours sipping coffee and talking about the way it was or whatever it is friends chat about on a lazy Sunday morning.

STALL 3

What to say? Divine, delectable, or just simply tasty. Sandro Serafini has literally brought Italy to the Himalayas. Fresh cheeses such as mozzarella, scamorza and a new nameless one that I want to call Sandro's Delight, a heavenly rich, soft, spreadable cheese. All made with fresh cow's milk, all at affordable prices. And there is the ever-important butter. His meat is a delight, wild boar

that is fresh and organic from Nagarkot. With this he makes spicy and non-spicy sausages and burgers, deliciously, in the Italian style, learned from his father.

Himal Farm is the name of his corner of the world. Go visit, or you can also buy these products and maybe more there, as he's always expanding. It is in Kumaltar, Lalitpur; ring 557.0479 for directions.

Why did Sandro get involved? He says "to have good food", which he needed. Also for a better life. He was a computer programmer in Rome, where he is from, but he's been living here now for ten years, married to a Nepalese lady. Their daughter

continued on page 18

THE GARDEN where the market is held reminds you of a place far away. There's something delightfully British colonial about it.

providing an alternative to what many see as the lean, mean, pre-packaged, commercial food machine. The organic produce of the Sunday market is especially important, considering the growing awareness worldwide about the use of chemicals in commercial farming. And, just as importantly, the market is a platform for likeminded people to come together to share their knowledge and love of good food.

The vendors at the Summit's Sunday Market also know the necessity for both quality and affordability. Take mozzarella cheese for example. You can go to a Kathmandu supermarket, and buy processed mozzarella for four to five rupees, but remember that word 'processed'. Sandro will sell you fresh mozzarella that he has made, that is local and for a better price. It is made by a real Italian who has grown up either eating or making cheese. And his profits remain in the

local economy. If you ask, he'll invite you to visit his farm so you can see for yourself. Now tell me, what big multinational company will do that?

THE CENTER OF IT ALL

The Summit Hotel at Kupandol Heights is an idyllic setting; the Himal mountains dominate the sky as you gaze across the city. The garden where the market is held reminds you of a place far away. There's something delightfully British colonial about it. Jungle foliage abounds, and red-bricked buildings help in distorting the time line. The permanent gazebo in which Bishnu Batas sells his vegetables and Bina Amatya sells her fruit jams, near poolside, all makes one feel as if to expect servants in white livery to appear with cool Gin n' Tonics.

The rustic, wooden, swinging half doors of the pool's changing rooms makes one feel as if a group of young,

rowdy English school boys will burst out any moment—knocking over the waitress (who serves visitors the market coffees for 15 rupees, and fresh pastries; try the custard) as they cannonball toward the pool. If you are wondering, patrons to the market can also use the pool and recliners, popular in the warm season. And, servants with G n' T's? Well, one can dream.

WHAT TO DO WITH IT ALL

I usually start off at Kaffe's bread stall, where the line forms quickly. He sells a multitude of other things, including fresh ravioli pasta for either vegetarian or non-veg tastes. Twenty good size pieces for 120 rupees, more than enough for lunch along with some of his garlic bread with fresh butter available from Sandro, who also sells fine mozzarella. From Batas in the gazebo you can buy fresh spring onions, and basil, and salad fixings, and

continued from page 56

is seven years old, and learning. We can look forward to the Serafini family's delights for some time to come....

STALL 4

The man from France, Francois Driard, with his winning smile and charm, has caused quite the stir in Kathmandu's food circles. His cheeses are in high demand. His mature tomme is currently his signature. But he also supplies a new petit cheese, fresh ricotta, and a selection of fresh and dry pork sausages. His farm called Himalayan Fresh Cheese is in Tokha, about 15 minutes north of the ring road. People are welcome to come for a visit and tasting, for a small cost. For more on the Francois Driard story and his mouth watering cheeses

see this month's 'People' section.

STALL 5

Young Juli Thapa Tamang from Tipling, near Ganesh Himal, best represents the opportunism that exists with the Sunday Market. Looking no more than 25, and barely a few whiskers on his innocent face, he lives in Sarmakoshi with his wife and four children. His stall specializes in selling woven plastic baskets that are available in a host of colors. Fruit baskets, table baskets, Christmas decorations, and so on. A basket he says takes about 14 hours to make. So you are definitely getting value for money. And, I must say, they seem quite the ingenious little things.

STALL 6

Fresh Himalayan Agro Products have been in business for 15 years and at the market for 11 of them, says Bina Amatya. Her wide variety of jams can be found in many of the supermarkets. The farm where the fruits are grown is at Thankot and they make the products in Bijuli Bazaar, Baneshwar. At the market they provide a full range of products: jams such as pear, strawberry and lopsi, and marmalades. She also sells dried tomatoes, and fruit rinds like orange and lemon coated in sugar. Try the strawberries covered in dark chocolate—they are to die for!

STALL 7

The godfather of the market, Bishnu Batas has been work-

ing the market for 18 years, since the beginning. His Lotus Land Organic Farm is where he grows a host of healthy vegetables, fruits, salad greens and herbs, all season dependent. When I shopped his stall recently, it was broccoli, yams, spring onions, strawberries, avocados, basil, parsley, different lettuce leaves, spinach, and so on. He also sells fresh homemade basil, roasted coffee beans and doggie treats.

Bishnu jokes that he has spent half his life already with the farm, and that there is only a quarter left, but he is thankful. The market has made him numerous connections, delivering to many restaurants and hotels. It has provided him with numerous good opportunities, he says with a content and thankful expression.



An array of woven plastic baskets in Tamang's stall 5 where children love to hangout.

sometimes farm, fresh eggs. Then, when you get home, wash the basil and spring onions and chop the basil roughly and the spring onions finely and fry them in oil until lightly browned. Add a half cup of tomato paste, and some tinned tomatoes (or fresh, if you prefer), turn down the heat and leave it to simmer for about ten minutes. Season it with salt and pepper, and if too acidic with the tomatoes add a little sugar. Trust your tastes.

Meanwhile, put heat a pan of water and as it starts coming to a boil, add a little salt and oil and the ravioli, stirring once or twice gently to make sure they don't stick together. Be warned: it cooks fast. Check regularly after 5 minutes. When just about done, add the basil and spring onions to your tomato sauce, strain your ravioli, now put it into a bowl and pour the sauce over it. Top it off with cheese and—wallah!, a meal fit for royalty. Feel free to vary the cheese using the scamorza instead; and Francois's mature cheese also goes quite well. You can add mushrooms to the sauce, too, if you like, or tuna, or whatever takes your fancy.

With the variety of sausages, good breads, cheeses, butter and salads available in Kathmandu, Continental style sandwiches are also easy to make as well as being wholesome. Again

Francois's cheese is perfect for this, along with the dried sausages. Another option that I like is a rustic burger and chips. Buy buns from Kafil's stall at the Sunday Market, then some wild boar meat burgers from Sandro. They cost between two and three hundred rupees for two pieces. Pick up some mature cheese from Francois, or mozzarella if you prefer, and lettuce and potatoes from Batas. At home, wash and cook the whole potatoes a little, then chop into segments and deep fry (French fry style, but I like 'em with the skins on), lightly grill the buns then fry the burgers in a little oil, with salt and pepper on top, and while that's cooking wash the lettuce, set out some ketchup and mayonnaise, dress the buns with your favorite salad greens, sauces and cheese of choice, and—take a deep breath—when the burgers are cooked pop them on the buns. The only thing left are the potatoes, which should be done by now. Salt them lightly salt and then to the plate. Wallah!—rustic burger and chips. Something for the kids, and the kid in you, both young and old.

These are just a few simple meals that can be done with ingredients easily gathered in ten minutes at the Sunday Market. And they don't take long to cook at home. Go have a look, and plan your menu.

AN ENDANGERED WEALTH

Weekend markets, here and around the world, have another motive. The methods used to make traditional breads, cheeses, and meat products, and the taste of organic foods, are quickly disappearing. Factories are replacing farmers. Recipes are being mass-produced. Pre-packaging distorts good taste with questionable preservatives. Meanwhile, the folks who sell traditional market produce are keeping a wealth of knowledge alive and well. Where will the term "good food" stand in ten years time? Nepal's Sunday Marketeers are proud that in some way they are preserving traditional food making knowledge for future generations. Even now, Sandro's seven year old daughter is learning how to make cheese.

If you cannot make it to the market on the Sunday, it also runs on Wednesdays is another day to catch the action, though the spread may a little more limited.

Happy shopping and gourmet eating •

The Sunday and Wednesday Market at the Summit Hotel opens around 9:30 or 10 a.m., and runs up to noon.

Pat Kauba is a freelance writer and photographer, who is also a fanatic about food. He can be contacted at patkauba@gmail.com.