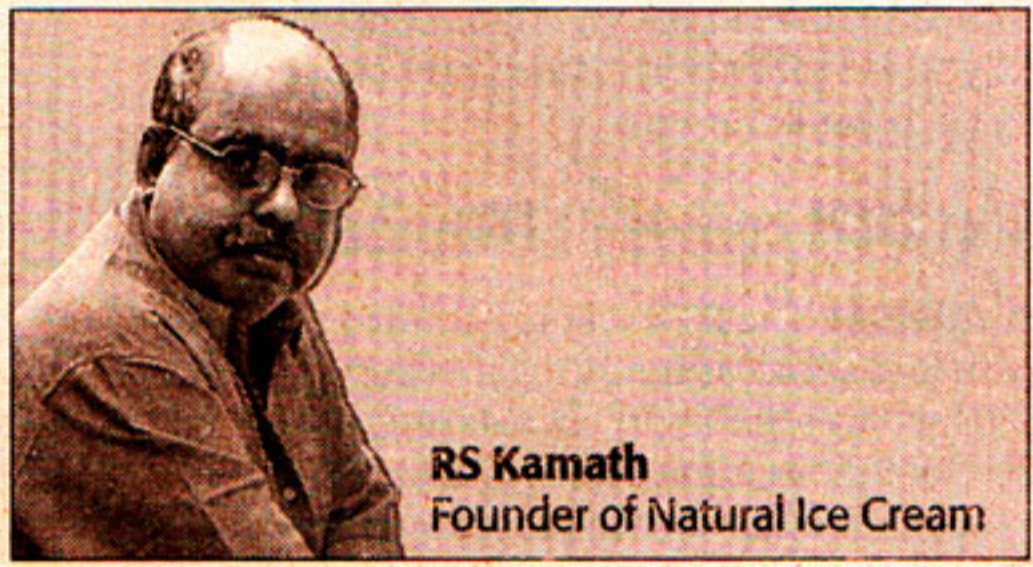


IF anyone can be credited with popularising the concept of 'fruit in the ice cream', it has to be 'Natural'. The company was the first to introduce ice cream with succulent pieces of fresh fruit embedded in the cream.

Today, Natural Ice Cream is a popular ice cream brand in Mumbai and in pockets of Maharashtra. Among a horde of big multinational brands, Natural is a true home grown brand, which has carved a niche of its own in the intensely competitive ice cream market. Natural Ice Cream is the brainchild of Raghunandan Srinivas Kamath, who decided to establish his own ice cream brand in 1983, following a split from his family business.

From humble beginnings, Mr Kamath has risen to become the owner of one of the most preferred ice cream brands in the market today. He recalls, "I used to assist my father who was a dealer of fresh seasonal fruits in Mangalore, I had sound knowledge about the qualities of fruits since my younger days. I knew what qualified as a good fruit and how to pick the right one. When I set out to launch my new brand of ice creams, this knowledge came in handy."

After setting up the first outlet of Natural Ice Cream in 1984 in Juhu with an investment of Rs 3 lakh, there has been no looking back. The brand name was thoughtfully chosen to express the true essence of the product. Mr Kamath adds, "Since every fruit has its own flavour and aroma, I did not



RS Kamath
Founder of Natural Ice Cream

Scoop of Success Reinventing the Ice Cream

find it necessary to use artificial ingredients for my ice creams. The name 'Natural' became an automatic choice."

At any time of the year, Natural offers ice creams of at least 25 to 30 flavours, depending upon the season. According to Mr Kamath, the speciality of his ice creams lies in the freshness of the fruits. His source of inspiration is equally unique. He lets us in on one of his secrets, "For me, it all begins at my dinner table and fond memories of my mother's kitchen – be it turmeric leaves or ginger or wild mango (kerry), I am open to experimentation with my ice creams. A few days back my wife had prepared a south Indian dish containing jackfruits, and I decided to incorporate its rich taste and flavour in my ice creams as well."

From custard apple to jamuns to musk-melon, there is no limit to this entrepreneur's imagination, nor is there a dearth of choices for ice cream aficionados at a Natural parlour.

The journey has been successful – from a single outlet, Natural has mushroomed to 53 outlets till date. Not much perturbed by the competition, Mr Kamath explains, "So far we have been facing competition only from shops which have merely added the word 'Natural' as prefix or suffix to their name and trying to imitate us." He also has strategies in place to beat the competition – continuously introducing new flavours, innovative and convenient packaging and efficient service.

Mr Kamath idolises Dr TMA Pai of the Manipal Group, who incepted the Syndicate Bank – a symbol of his simple yet potent ideas. He explains, "Dr Pai collected small savings from every household (as small as 50 paise) and promised a Medical College and a Bank in return. His vision was so clear right from the point he decided to undertake this journey." A food connoisseur, Mr Kamath also loves to travel and collect antiques. He has recently opened his own resort at Mangalore, called 'Lands Flavour', which is an extension of his passion for traditional cuisine and love for fruits.

– SAMEER HATTANGADI AND SAYANTI BANERJEE