

Try Yazd's traditional sweets: Haji Badam and Maqut



Maqut

Iranica Desk

Many believe that the term “cultural heritage” applies exclusively to historical artifacts and tangible remains left behind by previous generations. However, it's important to recognize that our intangible heritage, encompassing cultural creations and practices of our ancestors, holds great significance as well. These intangible aspects often find their rightful place in the country's national heritage list. Our country's cultural wealth encompasses both tangible and intangible

treasures. The tangible aspects, such as magnificent architectural structures and captivating artworks, showcase our rich heritage. Yet, equally significant are the intangible elements that shape our culture, including melodies, festivals, traditions, delectable culinary delights, and handicrafts. Together, they form an exquisite tapestry of our cultural heritage, ISNA wrote. Intangible heritage represents the intangible forms of culture, which may not have physical presence but are experiential and recordable. Unlike their tangible

counterparts displayed in museums, they transcend physical spaces, enriching our collective heritage. Boasting a magnificent ancient heritage, Yazd Province captivates with its abundance of historical marvels and fascinating landmarks. From tangible treasures to intangible wonders, many of them have received national and even global recognition.

Although many tangible heritage sites in Yazd are well-known, the intangible heritage of this region, which includes some significant local delicacies such as *Haji Badam* sweet, remains largely unknown. Nevertheless, they hold cultural value and have even received national recognition.

Haji Badam is a true gem among Yazd's renowned pastries. Made with the finest almond flour, chickpea flour, nutmeg, and eggs, this delicacy boasts extraordinary nutritional value. But that's not all. Its exquisite flavor and unparalleled distinction truly make it a pastry like no other.

Haji Badam has a great reputation among families due to its delicious taste and small size. It is also baked in some other cities of Iran like Kashan and Saveh. However, the fascinating history of this pastry dates back to Yazd itself, where it originated and became a global brand. According to research, almond is rich in unsaturated fats and nutritious proteins, making it a beneficial and health-promoting element. Almonds also contain a significant amount of fatty acids that help soften the skin. Due to its high con-



Haji Badam

tent of vitamin E, almond has anti-aging properties and helps prevent the formation of wrinkles.

On the other hand, nutmeg is widely recognized for its remarkable therapeutic effects in alleviating various types of pain. In traditional medicine, the nutmeg fruit and its oil are extensively utilized to effectively address ailments associated with the nervous and digestive systems.

Moreover, one of the hidden gems of Yazd culinary delights is a dessert called *Maqut*. This mouthwatering treat is not only known for its exquisite taste, but it also boasts a captivating aroma and vibrant colors. Moreover, *Maqut* is incredibly nourishing and promotes health. Indulging in this heavenly dessert will surely leave you satisfied and energized.

This exquisite Yazdi dessert is truly one-of-a-kind; it is typically enjoyed during

the colder seasons, as it is not usually prepared during the hot summer days. Its production spans from mid-autumn to mid-winter, creating a delightful treat for your taste buds.

The yummy ingredients of this delightful dessert include starch, water, fragrant rosewater, and melted Persian sugar candy. The cooking method is easy. First, we mix the starch with a cup of cold water, allowing the starch to dissolve completely in the water. Next, we carefully pour the dissolved starch into boiling water and give it a gentle stir, ensuring a perfect blend of flavors without any lumps formed.

Then, we boil all the ingredients for about 10 minutes and stir them regularly until it reaches the desired thickness. We pour the prepared mixture into a bowl and place it in the refrigerator. Once it sets, we add rosewater and musk.

Rey: A historical journey of rise and decline

Rey suffered in the eleventh century from incursions of the Ghuzz (a western Turkic people), but it recovered under the Seljuqs; the founder of this dynasty's might, Toghriq Beg, was buried there. The fatal blow was struck in the Mongol invasion of 1220. However, Rey had already become almost depopulated before that date as a result of factional strife between the Hanafis and Shafi'is.

In the

thirteenth century, the dissensions assumed the character of armed struggle; one legal school predominated among the city dwellers, the other among the villagers: this would suggest that the rivalry had economic rather than religious causes. After the Mongol calamity, Rey did not recover its former importance. One of the nine districts into which Persian 'Iraq, that is, ancient Media, was divided under the

Mongols was Rey, together with its local towns and villages, but the chief city of this district was not Rey but Varamin, which now also lies in ruins.

As a village, Varamin is already mentioned by the tenth century geographers. The district was administered under the Mongols by special hereditary governors. Rey was partly restored under the reign of the Ilkhan Ghazan (1295-1304 CE); also built (or rather restored) was the fortress called Tabarak in the northern part of the city at the foot of the mountain,

which had already existed in the twelfth century.

The inhabitants of the district were at that time mostly Shafi'is, and only a few villages remained aligned behind the Hanafis. After the collapse of the Ilkhans, Rey, as in the tenth century, shared the lot of the Caspian provinces and became part of the possessions of the Amir Vali, who had established his control over Astarabad and Mazandaran. In 1384 Vali was beaten near Astarabad by Timur, whose armies in that same year took Rey without resistance. The city was thus spared calamity under Timur. Rey is mentioned several times in connection with Timur's campaigns, but the district rather than the town is meant in this context.

The preference that the population had acquired for Varamin can be partly explained by the supply of water in the latter, which benefited from the most substantial watercourse in the district, the Jajrud.

Besides Varamin, however, Tehran, the present capital of Iran, to which the residents of Rey and Varamin must have moved, was already an important

city by the fifteenth century.

The ruins of Rey have been described more than once, by R. Ker Porter in the 1820s among others. The plan of the ruins that he made will never lose its relevance, because the remnants of the buildings and walls are no longer as evident today as they were in his time.

There are also several beautiful medieval constructions among the ruins of Varamin. Especially remarkable is the fourteenth century mosque whose building is attributed to the Ilkhan Abu Sa'id (1316-1335 CE).

Tehran, which has replaced these cities, is so new that a detailed description of it is not appropriate to a discussion of historical geography.

In its original form, the city differed little from other Persian towns; it had a quadrangular shape, with a gate in the middle of each side and two more gates as well as a citadel in the northern section.

The above is a lightly edited version of chapter entitled 'Rey and Hamedan,' from a book entitled, 'An Historical Geography of Iran,' written by W. Barthold and published by Princeton University Press, Princeton.

