Chaami, Buddu go cool with Falooda!

‘Wow’ exclaimed Chaami as she along with Buddu, a few classmates and their botany teacher got out from the Charbagh railway station at Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. These children from Bangalore were on an educational school trip for 3 days. They were greeted by their escort, Mishraji, from NBRI (National Botanical Research Institute), who spoke with a lot of warmth and updated them about his city with pride.

“This city of Nawabs has a magical charm, a charm that’s forever and a charm that’s apart. Be it the cultural charm or the monumental one, all are well conserved here to make Lucknow, ‘the city of many splendours’”, narrated Mishraji to the children who all were listening intently with rapt attention. After reaching the NBRI campus, without wasting any moment the children set off on their botanical tour. Beautiful flowers and plants were all over. Chaami and Buddu started collecting a few samples for their herbarium file.

Later in the evening, walking through the lanes and by-lanes of Chowk and Aminabad Chaami, Buddu and their friends had a taste of Lucknow of yore. The ‘tehzib’ or mannerism was very much prominent. Buddu was stumped when Mishraji addressed him as ‘Janab’ and the kids burst out in a roar of laughter. Mishraji added that “the dictum of ‘pehle aap’ is still very much a part of everyday life for a true Lakhnavi- and so natural it is – “Aadab” or salutation which has its own sophistication and style”, and Buddu reciprocated back in an “Aadab”.

As soon as they reached their hostel room back, Chaami took some seeds and put them in a glass of water. After a while, she actually saw them growing big and they were coated with mucilage. Buddu saw them and took the glass of seeds to show it to their teacher. Their teacher smiled and said, “these are kama kasturi seeds”. “Are they available in Bangalore?” enquired Chaami. “Oh yes, very much”, said their teacher, and Chaami made a mental note to posture her mother to grow these in her garden.

Next two days, the group discovered and enjoyed every moment of Lucknow. In the serpentine lanes, they savoured the world famous “Turke-ke-kabab”, “Rahini-ke-kulche nilhari”, “Bismillah-ki-biriyani”, “Radhey-ki malai gilori” and “lassi”, “Raja-ki-thandai” and finger-licking “Sharma-ke-chaat” at the eateries. Food had never tasted so yummy before.

After returning from Lucknow, Chaami showed the seeds to her mother. “Oh, this plant is there in our garden”, said her mother. Chaami and Buddu immediately ran out to explore and found a purpled coloured stem plant emanating a strong scent and similar seeds. She plucked few twigs and ran inside home. “Yes, this is the one, known as Kama Kasturi”, said her mother. Chaami recalled the name as her botany teacher had also mentioned the same name.

Chaami’s mother continued, “I remember my grandma giving me Kama Kasturi leaf juice along with honey when I had cough and fever. She used to apply the leaf juice on the body to keep me warm. It has peculiar sweet smell which is some times intoxicating. I often liked to play with the seeds when soaked in water. They appeared like gelatin”. Chaami said, “Yes, I remember now, Champai’s father took some seeds from our garden to remove dirt from his eyes. He cleaned the seeds and put one in each of his eye. The seed swelled and the dirt from his eyes came out”.

Later Chaami’s mother made a refreshing panakam (cool drink) from the seeds and told them more about the plant. Turn overleaf........
KAMA KASTURI

My botanical name: Ocimum basilicum

My common name: Sweet Basil

My local names:
SANSKRIT - Munjariki, Surasa, Varvara
HINDI - Babui tulsi, Gulal tulsi, Kali tulsi, Marua, Falooda
MARATHI - Marva, Sabza
GUJARATI - Damaro, Nasabo, Sabza
TELUGU - Bhutulasi, Rudrajada, Vepudupachha
TAMIL - Tirnirupachai, Karpura tulasi
KANNADA - Kama kasturi, Sajjagida
ORIYA - Dhala tulasi, Kapur kanti
KASHMIR - Niazbo
PUNJAB - Furrunj-mushk, Baburi, Niyazbo, Panr

How do I look?
I am an erect, shiny herb and can grow up to 90 cm. high.
My leaves are oval to lance like with acute tips. Both the sides of the leaves are glossy. Entire plant is sweet smelling which is very intoxicating some times. Seeds are black and oval shaped. When in contact with water, it floats and becomes sticky. Sweet basil possesses a clove-like scent with an aromatic, somewhat saline taste. The seeds of the plant are odourless with an oily, slightly pungent taste. When steeped in water, they liberate mucilage which is semi-transparent and nearly tasteless.

Where do you find me?
I am a native of Central Asia and North-West India, cultivated throughout India.

How do you grow me?
You can grow me by my seeds in the pot or in the gardens.
Best season is October-November in plains and in hills, March-April.
What do I yield?
I yield a volatile oil called Oil of Basil, used as a flavouring agent and also as perfume. Uses of oil: flavouring for confectionery, baked goods, sauces, ketchups, tomato pastes, pickles, vinegars, spiced meats, sausages and beverages. It is also used for scenting dental and oral preparations and in certain perfume compounds, notably jasmine blends, to impart strength and smoothness. Basil oil possesses insecticidal and insect repellent properties; it is effective against houseflies and mosquitoes. It is also bactericidal.

What are my Uses?
- I am considered as stomachic, anthelmintic, antipyretic, expectorant, carminative, stimulant.
- An infusion of the plant is given for joint pain and used as a gargle for foul breath.
- The juice of the leaves is used for earache and also for ringworm.
- Seeds possess cooling properties. Popularly used in sherbats, falooda (Ice creams).
- Seeds are also used in poultices for sores and sinuses.

FALOODA ICE CREAM RECIPE

Ingredients
- 1 litre milk
- 200 ml vanilla ice cream
- 1 packet of rose syrup
- 1/2 cup almonds and pistachios
- 1 cup falooda sev or vermicelli
- 1/2 cup milk cream
- 2 tablespoons falooda seeds
- 2 teaspoon rose essence

Simmer milk on low heat stirring all the time till the milk condenses.
- Add rose essence and cool.
- Boil water, add vermicelli and simmer for 5 -10 minutes.
- Take out the vermicelli, strain with cold water and keep aside.
- Soak falooda seeds in water for 2-3 hours.
- Prepare rose syrup as per directions given on the pack.
- In a tall sundae glasses put a spoon of rose concentrated syrup.
- Put in few strands of vermicelli and dollop of falooda seeds.
- Add a cup of sweetened milk.
- Freeze in cubes or kulfi cups