

Feature Article – A profile of Flurys

A Cakewalk through History: The legacy of Flurys

The iconic tearoom in Park Street, Kolkata has garnered much recognition for its breakfast menu and continues to attract customers from all over the world owing to its rich heritage and history.

Prakriti Basu

prakritib63@gmail.com



Being an exclusive tearoom at 18, Park Street, Flurys has been appealing to customers from all over the world

Photograph by: Prakriti Basu

At Flurys, storms are brewed in porcelain cups and butter knives glide against freshly baked bread, under a chandelier that has softly lit up conversations through the ages. A line of pastries lie behind the glass panel, awaiting their chance to be relished and the gorgeous pink boxes which grace the occasion of each delivery, sit on their regal thrones atop a shelf. A lot has changed over the years at Flurys, but the lingering nostalgia that celebrates its legacy has remained constant.

Kolkata is known for being a gastronomical paradise for food-lovers and Flurys stands as a landmark for the city's culture. Flurys is abuzz with visitors throughout the day, due to its extensive menu and exceptionally busy on mornings, catering to customers who come from all over the globe, just to try their English breakfast. From a humble origin in the 20s, the Swiss tearoom has had quite a journey, recently making headlines with its chocolate Durga idol, weighing 55 kilograms on display since the festive season.



The chocolate Durga idol which was covered in an article by NDTV during Durga Puja

Photograph by: Prakriti Basu

The tearoom had been first established by Swiss expatriate Joseph Flury and his wife, Frieda. It was a joint venture of Flury and his business partner, Quinto Cinzio Trinca and was entitled 'Flury and Trinca' until their partnership came to an end in 1939, when Cinzio Trinca and his wife opened another tearoom known as Trincas, right across the street from Joseph Flury's 'Flurys' which

gained a lot of traction amidst the affluent and prosperous British and Indian individuals of the time. Trincas on the other hand, has now been developed into a restaurant, hosting jazz shows frequently.



‘Flury and Trinca’ was later divided into Trincas and Flurys after their owners ended their partnership. Both of these places are however, exceptionally successful at present.

Photograph sourced from: <https://www.trincas.in> : the official website of Trincas

“During the British period, Flurys was one of the very few places in the country with a continental menu,” says Monojit Shaw, one of the branch managers at Flurys, Park Street.

Much after the country's independence, in 1965, Flurys was acquired by Jit Paul. Until the 1980s, the economy of West Bengal had been suffering due to political and social disruptions. In the 1970s, Flurys also took up catering services since customers could not visit very often. In the 1990s, the store was redesigned to attract visitors of the time and in 2004, a massive approach of rebranding took the decision to expand outside Kolkata.

Flurys adorns the old heritage building, Stephen Court which was established by Arathoon Stephens, a hotelier of Armenian origin who spent a fortune on the architecture of lavish garden houses and mansions across the city. He was also the founder of the Grand Hotel in Kolkata and the Everest Hotel in Darjeeling. Stephen Court is located at the junction of Park Street and Middleton Row, which were distinctly marked by opulence during the British period.

Though the experience of dining at Flurys was restricted to the elite initially, the menu and the prices have now been altered to a great extent, such that the tearoom extends numerous pocket-friendly items to its customers. "Apart from European confections, the menu at present also offers Mughlai cuisine as well as a collection of finely curated Bengali dishes during Durga Puja," says Flurys employee Subrata Mandal.

The tearoom is associated with the tagline 'Five Generations of Fine Confection,' reflecting how it has been carried forward almost like a tradition embedded in the very culture of the city. Despite the many changes that the place has undergone, certain bestselling items of the menu have retained their positions as customer favourites right from the beginning. "The cubed pastries, buttered croissants, rumballs and milk bread have tasted the same since the past 60 years," says Ranjit Rakshit, who has been a regular customer at Flurys for over six decades. "Flurys has also seen several architectural advancements, and pink and white were chosen for the primary colour scheme in the early 2000s. There used to be an aquarium in the earlier days, which was done away with in

the previous decade as well, but the tall glass windows overlooking the busy street and roadside book stalls outside, have always been a constant,” The loyal 85-year-old visitor further adds.



Customers have always been fans of the cubed pastries at Flurys

Photograph sourced from the Official Facebook page of Flurys India.

After the fire accident at Stephen Court in March, 2010 which had claimed several victims, Flurys was forced temporarily relocate its services outside the Park Hotel, right across the street. After nearly 40 days of reparations and renovations, the tearoom returned to its original location on the ground floor of Stephen Court, awaiting the longest queue of customers it had ever witnessed before. Music World, the record and music accessories store located right beside Flurys however could not sustain itself for much longer after the fire and was permanently shut down in 2014.

Flurys has expanded to 68 outlets across Kolkata, New Delhi and Mumbai in the form of cafés, restaurants and kiosks. The exclusive tearoom outlet still continues to run from Park Street Kolkata. Several advertisements have also

been put up by the confectionery chain about an outlet awaiting its inauguration in Digha – a quaint, seaside town in West Bengal. The outlet in Digha will mark the Flurys's first ever venture away from a city.

Due to its rich heritage, Flurys has been the subject of many books, the most popular being journalist Bachi Karkaria's *Flurys of Calcutta: The Cake That Walked* and *Cherries and Cream, The Baking & Confection Legacy of Bengal* by photographer Anirban Mitra and Gouri Basu, the former director of Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre. The tearoom had also risen to fame after Oscar-winning director, Satyajit Ray's films, *Jana Aranya* and *Pratidwandi* were there. The recent ZEE5 original movie, *Lost*, starring Yami Gautam, also chose Flurys for one of their scenes.