

Borawa anyone?



Flavoursome Borawa

Sweet and coconut-y and a touch of spice. It challenges your teeth with its hardy crunchy bite. Fresh out of the oven it looks like a friendly home baked goody, a flat round, brown cookie that covers the entirety of your palm. And it's called Borawa, a name easy to forget, but not its taste!

Words Prasadini Nanayakkara **Photographs** Indika de Silva and Damith Wickramasinghe

One sunny afternoon in Uda Walawe, a good three hours away from Colombo, a shop that appears cobbled together, is a welcome respite for us weary travellers. Sitting down for a breather across the expansive dam, the shop provided a variety of interesting nibbles. Among these was a curious biscuit that resembled a flat bread except it was baked to a crisp. A few bites in we tried to identify the different ingredients, including a subtle hint of spice. The biscuits called Borawa, were the first of its kind that we had encountered anywhere and prompted us to find what they were all about.

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Borawa biscuits took us to the bustling town of Middeniya where a little baking warehouse of the Chandanasiri Bake House, was busily emanating warm enticing fumes. Inside was a bustle of activities and trays piled up with baked goods. The interior was warmed by the nearby kiln bristling with heat. We were graciously invited into have a closer look at the simultaneous tasks unfolding. Two men were busy mixing the dough with vigour. Wheat flour, sugar, coconut, cumin seeds, and baking powder (appa soda) comprised this sticky dough that was being whipped back and forth and then left to sit for a while. Then little mounds of the dough are placed in the greased trays and also kept for a time before being stamped down to flat rounds with a mould. The trays are then piled into the kiln till they turn a rich golden brown along with a nice spice tinged aroma. The biscuits are then taken out to be cooled and removed from the trays to be packeted. It was all suitably simple for this homely biscuit.

Within the store area were the packed goods piled high and it wasn't only the Borawa that we found. Two other similar snack and baked goods were Jubilee - a smaller biscuit coated in sugar and Aguti - a thick rectangular crunchier biscuit. Together they made quite a spread for tea time along with a hot cup of ginger tea or so we fancied idly amidst the heady aroma of baking. Usually sold in little wayside shops away from the cities, we wondered why such punch-filled snacks weren't more familiar sights at tea time tables. The owner of the bakery Priyantha suggested that many bakeries had ceased to produce the biscuits unable to supply a continuous production and moved on to other more profitable goods. His was one of few remaining bakeries producing about 100 packets a day for distribution amongst shops and stores in the region. This may well be true as we only happened upon one other shop in the region that used to produce these biscuits, however their recipe included sago and were known as 'Sau Borawa'.

Knowing that we may not chance upon the good ol' Borawa in awhile we stocked our bags with the varieties of baked goods to take home a taste of this crunchilicious goodness!

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