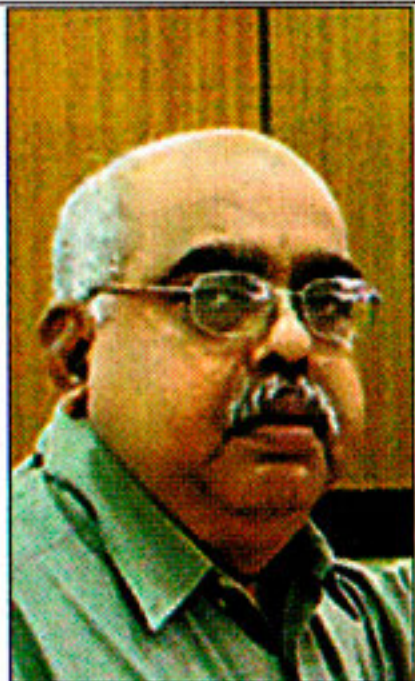


NATURAL ICE CREAM

TAKE THE TRADITIONAL *matka kulfi*, the creamy blend of non-industrial ice-cream, and infuse it with bursts of fresh fruit — that's the combination that makes Mumbaiites flock to Natural. But that's now. Founder Raghunandan Kamath remembers how he struggled to get the ice-cream chain going. He needed to make large amounts of ice-cream the traditional way, but had no equipment. So he designed the equipment himself. He did not have enough money to pay an interior decorator to do up his first shop. So he asked his wife to do it. As his business grew by word of mouth, he invested more money into his venture and opened more outlets. Today, Natural ice-cream is a dessert many Mumbaiites swear by.

HOW THE IDEA HAS CHANGED MUMBAI

RS Kamath's simple but powerful idea of adding slivers of fruit to the traditional *matka kulfi* has made his Natural Ice-Cream chain a multi-crore business and given the city some of its most original ice cream flavours such as *sitafal* and *badam*. The chain now offers Mumbaiites 100-odd flavours.



What it took...

Got the idea from: After opting out of a restaurant business with his brother, Kamath was at a loose end. So he combined his knowledge about fruit — his father was a fruit dealer — and ice cream — the eating chain he ran with his brother served ice cream — by creating a new kind of ice cream: *kulfi* mixed with seasonal fruits.

Starting doubts: It was difficult for the budding entrepreneur to get into mass production since traditional ice cream has to be made manually. So Kamath had to get special equipment made. Getting this equipment to maintain a particular creamy consistency characteristic of Natural's ice cream was also difficult.

Money problems: When

Kamath started out, he had just Rs 3 lakh and a small place in Juhu. He did not want to invest too much in the venture upfront, so he cut costs wherever he could, for instance, by hiring just three workers and keeping the first outlet's decor simple.

Other obstacles: When orders began increasing, Kamath had to process every day an average 500 kg of *sitafal* (custard apple), the most popular flavour. Manually, he was able to de-seed just 2 kg. So he was forced to get special machinery that would efficiently de-seed large quantities of the fruit.

- Outstanding personal qualities:**
- Humble
 - Focused
 - Open to experimenting