

R.S
KAMATH

54. ICE CREAM MAKER

CMD, OUR TIMES ICE CREAM
INITIAL INVESTMENT IN 1983 Rs 4 lakh
CURRENT TURNOVER Rs 30 crore

EHASKAR PALE



COLD IS GOLD

That mango, custard apple, *chikoo* and coconut could evoke immense passion in someone becomes crystal clear within 10 minutes of striking a conversation with Raghunandan Srinivas Kamath, chairman and managing director, Our Times Ice Cream, the parent company of Mumbai's well-known Natural Ice Cream. The son of a fruit-seller, Kamath's fondness for fruits began in 1984 when he sold his first fruit ice cream from a small shop in Juhu Scheme in Mumbai. "I knew I had to specialise in something to stand out. This is when my love affair with fruits began," says Kamath.

Currently operating out of a 4,000-square-foot factory that produces four to five tonne of ice-cream every day, Kamath soon plans to shift into a 20,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility. Present in Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad currently, he wants to take Natural to Delhi and Bangalore next year.

Though Natural has outlets all over Mumbai, its Juhu Scheme branch is still the big money-spinner, with an annual turnover of Rs 3.5 crore. It was an unfortunate encounter with the Income Tax Department that led to the company's expansion. "I had no knowledge about keeping regular accounts," says Kamath, who lost everything to the tax department in 1994 except his brand name and his recipes. This is when he decided to adopt the franchisee model.

Though the manual labour earlier necessary for ice creams has been done away with, sourcing equipment hasn't been easy for Kamath. Since he insists on not using stabilisers, artificial colours and ingredients, the machines had to be custom made. But if there's one thing that hasn't changed, it's Kamath's experiment with new fruits, even 25 years on. That despite the fact that till now Natural has introduced 100 different flavours till now and has 21 on its menu right now. Scoopaholic, isn't he?

by Jhilmil Motihar

success MANTRA

Even though Natural has introduced 100 flavours till now, Kamath is still experimenting.

turning POINT

When he lost his entire income to the IT department in 1994 for failure to keep proper accounts.

growth PATH

It took him 25 years to open 51 outlets. Now he plans to double the number within the next year.