

Ambalapuzha Palpayasam

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Ambalapuzha Palpayasam is one of the most important 'nivedyam's of Sreekrishnaswamy Temple and it is offered at noon Pooja. At the very mention of the place name Ambalapuzha, a very sweet and delicious taste of Palpayasam will be brought to the memory of those who have tasted it. Its fame is so wide spread in all over Kerala that it has become a proverbial expression to describe something exotic in taste.

Ambalapuzha, a beautiful village in the sea-shore surrounded by rivers and paddy fields and it is situated 15 km. southwards from Alappuzha Town. It was a Kingdom named Chempakassery until the first half of 18th Century. Chempakasseri was reputed for its cultural, spiritual and literary heritage. Melpathoor,

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Pudding Premier

Ambalapuzha Palpayasam

G. Sudhakaran, Minister for Devaswom



With the light pink colour and a special kind of fragrance and flavour, the Ambalapuzha Palppayasam stands as a unique offering to Lord Krishna, the presiding diety of the Ambalapuzha Temple. This rare pudding was the special menu for the lunch of the erstwhile kings of Travancore. The taste of the pudding of the Ambalapuzha Temple, known as South Guruvayoor, is not available

elsewhere. This makes Ambalapuzha pudding the heartiest offering.

This traditional divine product stands unique in the list of gifts, Kerala can offer to the world. There are abundant possibilities to make Ambalapuzha a global pilgrim destination. All steps will be taken to retain the quality and standards of the Ambalapuzha Palpayasam as such for ever.

The fascinating aroma and the sandalwood colour of Palpayasam makes it unique which one would not find anywhere else.

Ezhuthachan and Kunjan Nambiar are some of the most prominent names in the history of Kerala who have enriched this landscape with their unparalleled contribution to language and literature.

Chempakassery Kingdom was ruled by Devanarayanans and they were Malayala Brahmins (Namboothiri). Every ruler took the title Devanarayanan as identity. Among them Pooradam Thirunal Devanarayanan & Pooruruttathi Piranna Devanarayanan were very famous. The Chempakassery Kingdom existed for almost 450 years. During their reign this place was considered as the cultural capital of Kerala. But in 1746 Marthanda Varma invaded and annexed Chempakasseri to Travancore.

There are numerous stories and legends in connection with the origin and

evolution of Ambalapuzha Sreekrishna Swamy Temple. Palpayasam, the holy offering to Deva has become the most distinguished hallmark of the divine grace of Lord Krishna at Ambalapuzha Temple.

According to legend, the local Raja of Chempakasseri took a huge loan of Paddy from a Brahmin at Thalavady. During a time of calamity and famine the Raja righteously undertook to feed his people but he was unable to repay the loan, which soon mounted with interest to 36,000 Paras of Paddy.

The Brahmin demanded repayment and finally stood at the entrance to the Ambalapuzha Temple to prevent the Raja from performing Pooja to Lord Krishna until he could return the paddy.

Greatly troubled, the Raja summoned his Minister to propose a solution, which would both satisfy the Brahmin and save the Raja's own righteous reputation. The Minister, Parayil Menon called upon all the subjects of the Raja's Kingdom to contribute whatever Paddy they could and bring it to the courtyard of the temple.

That very day, before noon the "Anakkottil" before the temple was overflowing with Paddy. The Minister then ordered the Brahmin to clear the paddy in front of the temple before "Uchasribali", noontime offering to the Gods.

Despite all his pleas, not a single subject came forward to help the Brahmin lift that paddy. In frustration and resignation the



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Brahmin acknowledged the righteousness of the Raja and then offered all that Paddy to Lord Krishna provided its revenue should be used to fund a Palpayasa Nivedyam. To this day the *Prasad* preparation continues.

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The fascinating aroma and the sandalwood colour of Palpayasam makes it unique which one would not find anywhere else. Women just like "Gopikas" fresh and clad in white after bath used to bring Milk for Palpayasam daily and Melpathoor had mentioned in his poetry about these milk carriers. The water used for the preparation of Palpayasam is taken from the "Manikkinar" (well), which is situated very near to the Nalambalam (Main building of the temple). The Payasam is being prepared by Namboothiri Brahmins and the finishing of preparation is marked by a loud devotional call to "Vasudeva" by these Brahmins and this will be followed by the final touch of adding adequate sugar to sweeten the Payasam.

Now the cost of Payasam is Rs.32/- per litre. In 1962 the cost for one *Edangazhy* was only one rupee. As per the Devaswom accounts, thirty-six paras of Milk was used until 1091 Malayalam Era (AD 1916). The Milk and water is being boiled in the proportion of 1:4 and well-cleaned rice is poured at the end of entire water is evaporated. It is believed that Guruvayoorappan reaches here daily to share Palpayasam. During the period of Tippu's invasion the Idol of Sree Guruvayoorappan was brought here and protected safely.

In earlier days Palpayasam was distributed to the Brahmin travellers, Vakakars (specially honoured people,) temple officials, certain families and workers). But since 1959 entire payasam prepared for the offering is sold and all conventions were stopped.

As the payasam is prepared only in a limited quantity earlier booking is needed. The scarcity of pure milk is a main problem and now as per the demand of devotees excess milk is collected from Milma Booth. Anyhow Ambalapuzha Palpayasam is having high reputation and it denotes the enlightened history of Ambalapuzha Sreekrishnaswamy Temple. ■