

Irani cafe: Yazdani Bakery

Yazdani Bakery, an Irani cafe in Mumbai was opened by Mehrwan Zend in 1953. He was a Parsi baker. And the building was originally a Japanese bank, but then was sold off. It is run by the third generation now and has about it a certain quaintness. Like all Irani cafes, it seems to lack maintenance and things just seem to lie about, like they always did. I don't personally know why, but sometimes this adds to the atmosphere and in Irani cafes, it most definitely makes the nostalgia palpable!

The crowds love the food they serve here and the dishes have a consistency. That probably is one of their biggest selling points.

At Yazdani, all the products are handmade and in traditional ovens, they make bread, bruns, *pav*, *khari* (a kind of puffy biscuit). The founder of this institution



Mr Zend was a boxer and even took part in some boxing competitions. Check out his pictures in the cafe if you choose to visit.

But before I go any further, let me explain what *brun-mask*a or *pav-mask*a is. It's a piece of bread — like

a bun — cut down the middle and then slathered, stuffed, artery-clogingly with salted butter. Some of the butter melts, and seeps into the pores of the well-risen bun, the rest stays in the middle. And it comes together with a cup of *Sulei-*

mani or Irani *chai*. *Suleimani chai* is black tea with sugar, and if you want, a dash of lime. Irani tea is sweet, milk *chai*. I stood at the preparation table and observed the servers go about getting a *brun-mask*a ready.

Lines of buns and *pav* waited to be smacked and slathered with butter. I shuddered and at the same time drooled over the amount of butter he took on his knife as he went about evenly coating the bun's middles. There were stacks of 500 gm packs of butter, cover removed, just sitting in their butter paper. I doubt if I have seen that much butter in my life. I left the cafe with my tummy full of a *brun-mask*a, one *pav-mask*a and half a *Sulaimani chai*.

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