



THEKUA IS A PRASAD OFFERING TO SUN GOD DURING CHHATH PUJA FOLLOWS MALLIARD REACTION

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ABSTRACT

Thekua (ठेकुआ) is a traditional, deep-fried sweet cookie originating from the Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand. It is made primarily from whole wheat flour, jaggery or sugar, and ghee, often flavoured with fennel, cardamom, and coconut. Thekua is a significant Prasad (holy offering) during the Chhath Puja festival, dedicated to the Sun God. Its name comes from the Hindi word "thokna" (to hammer), referring to the action of pressing dough onto a wooden mould during its making.

KEYWORDS: chhath puja, wheat flour, malliard reaction, jaggery or sugar, ghee, cashew nut, raisins, fennel, cardamom, and coconut.

Overview: Thekua (Thokwa), is an Indo-Nepalese sweet dish popular in Southern Nepal and the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Thekua is a revered Prasad, offering to god, during Chhath puja. It has been used as a sweet snack for centuries in these places. Thekua, dating back around 3,700 years to the

Rigvedic period (1500-1000 BCE), is referred to as 'Apupa' in the Rig-Veda. Made with wheat flour, jaggery, milk, and ghee, it was first used for its medicinal benefits and later became a traditional offering to the Sun God during Chhath Puja.



Figure1: Thekua preparation & Chhath celebration.

Preparation: The main ingredients of thekua are wheat flour, chasni (melted sugar) and ghee. Jaggery can sometimes be used as an alternative to sugar. Dough is prepared using these four main ingredients and cardamom can be added to enhance the taste. A special wooden cookie mould is used to form various designs on

the thekua. Dough is deep fried in ghee or vegetable oil until it becomes reddish brown. It is soft when hot but hardens after it cools. It needs no preservatives and it can be preserved for several days for eating. The preparation of thekua for the Chhath celebration is usually done in the worshipping room, to maintain the purity. Thekua is

a traditional Indian cookie, a deep-fried sweet biscuit made primarily from whole wheat flour (atta), ghee, and a sweetener like jaggery (unrefined sugar) or regular sugar. It is often flavoured with ingredients such as

fennel seeds and cardamom, and sometimes includes desiccated coconut or nuts. The dough is deep-fried until golden brown, resulting in a cookie that is crispy on the outside and soft inside.



Figure 2: Thekua.

- ✓ Whole Wheat Flour (Atta): The base of the cookie, giving it a wholesome texture.
- ✓ Ghee: A clarified butter that adds richness and flavour.
- ✓ Sweetener: Typically jaggery, but sugar or honey can also be used.
- ✓ Flavours: Commonly fennel seeds and ground cardamom, which add a fragrant and earthy taste.
- ✓ Optional Additions: Some recipes include ingredients like desiccated coconut or dry fruits such as cashews and almonds for added texture and flavour.
- ✓ Oil: Used for deep-frying the thekua until it achieves a golden-brown colour.

How it's made

1. Mixing: The dry ingredients (flour, spices, coconut) are combined with melted ghee.
2. Dough Preparation: The sweetener, dissolved in a little water or syrup, is added, and the mixture is kneaded into a soft dough.
3. Shaping: Small balls of dough are rolled, often pressed into decorative cookie moulds.
4. Frying: The shaped dough is then deep-fried in hot oil until it is golden brown and crisp.

Thekua is a popular sweet snack in regions like Bihar and Jharkhand, and is a significant offering during the Chhath Puja festival.

Traditional thekua made with whole wheat flour and jaggery can be a healthy snack, providing energy, fibre, and minerals. The use of jaggery makes it a healthier alternative to refined sugar, while whole wheat flour offers more fibre than all-purpose flour. However, its healthiness depends on the preparation method; deep-frying can add unhealthy fats, so baking is a healthier alternative.



Figure 3: Bihar, Jharkhand & Uttar Pradesh.

Health Benefits

- **Provides Energy:** The combination of wheat flour and jaggery offers a quick source of energy.
- **Rich in Fibre:** Whole wheat flour contributes to a healthy digestive system and helps prevent constipation.
- **Contains Minerals:** Jaggery provides essential minerals, while ghee is a source of good fats.
- **Natural Sweetener:** Using jaggery instead of refined sugar makes it a healthier choice.
- **Antioxidant Properties:** The ingredients in thekua contain antioxidants that help fight free radicals in the body.
- **Boosts Immunity:** The nutrients, especially from jaggery and ghee, can help boost the body's immunity.

Factors Affecting Healthiness

- **Sweetener Choice:** Opt for jaggery over refined sugar for greater health benefits.
- **Preparation Method:** While traditionally deep-fried, baking thekua is a healthier alternative that reduces fat intake.
- **Ingredient Quality:** The quality of ingredients, like the purity of the jaggery and ghee, also plays a role in its overall health profile.

Like any snack, thekua should be consumed in moderation to maintain a balanced diet. Thekua can be stored for about 2-4 weeks or even longer (up to 30-45 days) if stored properly in an airtight container in a cool, dry place, making it a good dry sweet to keep on hand. Ensure the thekua is completely cool before storing to maintain its crispness and avoid moisture, which can make it soft. Let the Thekua cool completely before storing it in an airtight container. It stays fresh for 15-20 days, making it a long-lasting snack.

Tips for Storing Thekua

- **Cool Completely:** Let the thekua cool down to room temperature before storing it.
- **Use Airtight Containers:** Transfer the cooled thekua into an airtight container to keep it fresh.
- **Keep in a Cool, Dry Place:** Store the container in a cool, dry environment away from moisture to preserve its crisp texture.
- **No Refrigeration Needed:** Thekua doesn't require refrigeration as it can stay fresh at room temperature for its long shelf life.
- **Pack in Small Batches:** For convenience, you can store thekua in small, daily batches in airtight tiffin boxes for grab-and-go snacks.



Figure 4: Thekua ingredients [wheat flour, jaggery, ghee, cashew nut, raisins, fennel, cardamom & coconut].

It is a great snack recipe and very quick and easy to make. Thekua is made as a Prasad/offering for the Chhath Puja, Saraswathi Puja, and also on other festive occasions. Traditionally, these Thekua are deep fried, but Poonam had baked them instead. Thekua is one of the most important puja offerings, which represents the fruits of toil and labour. It is prepared with wheat flour, jaggery, and ghee. While offered to the Sun God, it is a gratitude expression seeking good health and prosperity. This thekua recipe is a delightful treat to serve with a warm cup of your favourite chai, as their crunchy exteriors make them a perfect dipping cookie.

Serving Size: 1

Energy (kcal): 426.00 Kilocalories

Protein: 7.8 g

Fat: 11.0 g

Indian Cookie Biscuit Made with Jaggery, desi ghee, Cashew Nuts and Raisins. The word thekua, comes from the verb 'thokna' literally meaning 'to hammer'. The process of making this cookie involves pressing the dough hard against a wooden mould. Named for this motion (thoka hua), the original word for this dish was thokua, which then transformed to thekua.

Thekua is a traditional sweet cookie from Bihar and Jharkhand, India, and it is a quintessential food for the Chhath Puja festival. Chhath Puja is a significant Hindu festival dedicated to the Sun God, Surya. Thekua, made from whole wheat flour, jaggery, and ghee and often flavoured with cardamom, is a central and symbolic offering, known as Prasad, during this four-day festival.

Thekua should be fried in oil heated to a medium-hot temperature, ideally around 160°C (320°F) or 180°C–190°C (360°F–375°F). Frying at too high a heat will cause the thekua to darken quickly on the outside while remaining uncooked inside. To test the oil temperature, drop a small piece of dough into it; if it rises gradually and bubbles, the oil is ready.

Frying Temperature and Techniques

Medium-Hot Oil: Aim for medium-hot oil, which is crucial for even cooking.

Temperature Range: The recommended temperature range is around 160°C (320°F) or 180°C to 190°C (360°F to 375°F).



Figure 5: Thekua moulds.

Prasad: Thekua is a main offering of Prasad (sacred food) to the Sun God, symbolizing devotion and purity. Thekua is a traditional deep-fried sweet snack from Bihar made from whole wheat flour (Atta).

Symbolic Ingredients: The ingredients are symbolic: wheat signifies sustenance, jaggery represents sweetness and purity, and ghee symbolizes wealth.

Tradition: Making thekua in large quantities is a family bonding experience and a cherished cultural ritual during the festival.

Ingredients: The primary ingredients for thekua are: Whole wheat flour, Jaggery (or sugar), Ghee, Cardamom powder, and Optional additions like dry fruits and coconut. Thekua is a sweet dish, while the Maillard reaction is the chemical process that causes browning and develops flavour in many cooked foods. Thekua is prepared by frying it in oil, which cooks the dough

Avoid High Heat: High heat will cause the thekua to cook too quickly on the outside, leaving the interior dough raw.

Avoid Low Heat: Frying in cold oil will cause the thekua to absorb too much oil, resulting in a greasy and not crispy texture.

How to Test Oil Temperature without a Thermometer

1. Dough Test: Drop a small piece of the thekua dough into the oil. If it rises to the surface gradually and begins to bubble, the oil is ready.

2. Bread Test: Drop a small piece of bread into the oil. It should turn golden brown in about 60 seconds. If it stays pale, the oil needs more heat; if it gets too dark, the oil is too hot.

3. Popcorn Test: Drop a kernel of popcorn into the oil. Once it pops (around 180°C/360°F), the oil is close to the correct temperature.

through and helps achieve a browned exterior through the Maillard reaction.

A group of 16 people from Darbhanga, Bihar prepared a Thekuwa of 91 kg in 2019 to catch the attention of the Limca Book of Records.

REFERENCES

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