Bene Israel Halwa - Sweet and simple
Corn flour halwa is actually the easier version of the more traditional and popular 'Chikha cha Halwa', which is made from wheat but involves a more difficult and time consuming process.

I learned these recipes from my husband’s Aunt Rosy. Rosy Aunty is well known throughout the community for her excellent traditional cooking and always makes fabulous cakes for every occasion. For parties, she comes up with wonderful snacks and dishes, mostly her own invention; how all the family waits for her to bring her latest surprise dish.

In the Bene Israel community, halwa is a signature dish and a specialty for Rosh Hashanah, but it is also prepared during many special occasions like marriages, mehndi ceremonies which take place a day before weddings, brit milahs, bar mitzvahs, anniversaries and house warming ceremonies. I have many wonderful memories of eating halwa or helping to prepare it for such special occasions.

During Rosh Hashanah halwa is distributed among relatives and friends and even my non-Jewish friends wait for my chocolate halwa as it has become my signature dish thanks to Aunty Rosy.

Coconut halwa is another Bene Israel specialty. Many Bene Israel dishes (sweets, main dishes, deserts) contain coconut as the main ingredient since coconut is found in abundance in Konkan Coast. Today it is still an important part of many Bene Israel’s traditional celebrations wherever we travel.

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**Corn flour Coconut Halwa**

- Corn flour – 250g
- Sugar – 350g
- Coconut milk – 2 liters
- Pistachios & almonds – 1 tbsp each
- Edible color – pink or orange (3 to 4 drops)
- Cardamom powder – Half tsp
- Nutmeg – ¼ tsp
- Salt – ¼ tsp

Sieve the corn flour and then mix with coconut milk. Add sugar, coloring and salt. Mix well. Cook over stove, stirring continuously to prevent sticking for 45 minutes. To test, spread a little on a plate. Halwa should come out clean and not stick to the fingers. Add cardamom & nutmeg powder & pour mixture into flat tins. Sprinkle chopped dry fruits on top & cut into desired shape when cooled.

**Corn flour Coconut Chocolate Halwa**

- Corn flour – 250g
- Sugar – 400g
- Coconut milk – 2 liters
- Cocoa powder – 4 tbsp
- Almonds & pistachios – 1 tbsp each
- Salt – ¼ tsp

Follow above directions substituting cocoa power for the cardamom powder.