

Go to...



Our Global Table



MENU



You are here: [Home](#) » [Food News](#) » [Interviews](#) » [Pastry Chef Rubina Hafeez and Gür Sweets Halal Bakery](#)

Pastry Chef Rubina Hafeez and Gür Sweets Halal Bakery

in [Interviews](#)

When I found out there was a halal bakery in town, I honestly couldn't believe it. It was the first time anyone had ever mentioned anything like it, particularly right in our own backyard. I couldn't wait to try it out and with the excuse of meeting up with a friend I hadn't seen in a long time, I got a glimpse of the bakery and the pastry chef I pursue later for this interview. So sit back with a cup of coffee, relax and enjoy the views...they're delicious.



Rubina Hafeez Choudhry opened up Gür Sweets in a bustling part of downtown Elmhurst, IL because she wanted to be part of the local community and wanted her bakery to have a similar feel and appeal of those in Europe. In fact, that's how I felt when I first visited. If you live nearby, this is a place you can walk to. It has a neighborhood feel, yet the sweet options are totally unexpected.

|



sat down with Rubina to interview her about how she started a career in culinary arts, why she opened the bakery and what she hopes to do in the future.

In our conversation, I learned much about her, the bakery and all the things she wants young aspiring pastry chefs to know, too.

Here's a recap of our conversation (not an exact transcription):

MHK: Can you tell us what Gür means?

Chef Rubina: *Gür* is an Urdu word for sugar in its purest form. It's a condensed version of sugar cane, or *jaggery*. It's kind of like Mexican *piloncillo* and is golden in color. It's called the '**King of Sugar**' and it's softer than what most of us recognize as sugar. I love all the sweets in my bakery and don't make anything I don't like, but one of my favorites is the Gür Cupcake.

MHK: So, tell us a little about yourself- where are you from and how did you end up opening Gür Sweets?

Chef Rubina: I'm from the Western Suburbs of Chicago but have traveled quite a bit to Europe (France, the UK, Germany). I come from a large family who loves to cook. Where my family is originally from is Punjabi in Pakistan and are known as foodies there. I've only been to Pakistan three times but I have an authentic desire to cook the way my grandparents and ancestors used to cook. I also married a fellow Pakistani with a palette for creating recipes.

With my family's encouragement and blessing, I catered on the side for family and friends while working as a software engineer and then went on to take some baking courses just for fun. I went part time for two years and entered the pastry arts program, which I loved. I worked through school, saved up and opened Gür Sweets on the advice of family and because I found the right location for it. Downtown Elmhurst has the small neighborhood feel like Europe, a community feel.



Rubina is adamant that her bakery is 100 % halal and after showing me what she uses to bake her products as a substitute

for any alcohol or doubtful animal-based ingredients, it looks like she's thought this through quite thoroughly and has made all the preparations to create sweet goodness that anyone consuming halal would be happy about: alcohol-free extracts, halal gelatin for things like marshmallows, halal meats for the savory samosas (they're awesome, mashallah).



Dough for Samosas



Rubina and her sous chef are there early in the morning to prepare all the items from scratch. For the samosas, she uses an over-sized wok because she says they cook better this way and they have more control over how they're prepared as opposed to using a commercial fryer. I was able to try her samosas and not only were they so delicious and not super spicy, they weren't oily- indeed prepared well.



What was even more interesting was seeing a batch of Irish Soda Bread on the prep table ready to be put in the oven, not something you might think you would see at most bakeries.



Gur Sweets Commercial Oven

It looked and smelled phenomenal.



Commercial Stand Mixer- love these



Irish Soda Breads Just Out of the Oven

For me, it was the first time I've ever been in a bakery and felt I could order anything I wanted without worry.

And that, I did.



Halal Tiramisu- need I say more?



Coffee Cake- absolutely fresh, delicious and a perfect gift to take to a neighbor or friend.

She even sells homemade fresh bread without all those dough conditioners that come from some really questionable sources,

not to mention many store-bought breads that have a ton of ingredients that shouldn't be part of a bread recipe.



Freshly homemade bread- dense and heavy goodness. No artificial ingredients.



Just look at all this variety.



Key Lime Cupcakes

Okay, I have to say that the doughnuts were my favorite part not because I'm a huge fan of doughnuts, but because it may have seriously been well many years since I've had a doughnut that I whose ingredients I could trust. Not just because it's halal, but also because of the fresh and wholesome ingredients she uses to make all of her items.



They were ah-mazing...



And this is where all the work begins. Gotta love colorful **Kitchen Aid Stand Mixers** in any kitchen...



Cream Puffs were my take home gifts...everything on them home made. She stole my heart with the creamy cream.



Chef Rubina wants to make a difference in the community, to help and to give back, and she believes that if we can help one another we'll be a lot stronger for it. Her advice to those novice bakers who want to enter the field or anyone who has a passion for food and wants to do something with it?



Just do it. Get the self-satisfaction of doing something you love or you'll be miserable and have an emptiness inside of you.

And with that, she surprised me with her **Tiramisu Cupcake**, probably one of the best frosting I've ever tried.



There is so much sweet diversity in this cozy little bakery that it's the perfect spot for an evening dessert for couples, a place to take the kids for something new and different, or just to give yourself a break from life's hectic pace and read a book or surf the internet with their free Wi-Fi. I found the interior to be pretty, relaxing (no loud music) and super friendly.

If you're visiting Chicago soon or live anywhere nearby, this is a place to check out. I personally need to get back there soon.

Gur Sweets is offering a **special coupon code** to anyone coming into the bakery for one week from today's date. Mention coupon code **MHK0220** to get a special discount. And tell Chef Rubina I sent you...

Gur Sweets is located at: 162 N. York Street in Elmhurst, IL 60126. They are open from 7 am to 7 pm. Call for special cake orders: 630.833.0008

 Copyright protected by Digiprove © 2013 Yvonne Maffei
Some Rights Reserved

Share !

 **Tweet** 8  **Like** 21  **+1** 0

 **Submit**  **Share**  **Pin it**

Tagged with: CHICAGO CUPCAKES DESSERTS GUR SWEETS
HALAL BAKERIES INTERVIEWS PASTRY ARTTS

« Previous:
Zaffron

Next: »
IFANCA's 15th Annual Halal Food
Conference 2013