

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Making Murukkus - Creating a Sense of Togetherness

(Original)

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Today, I am making murukkus.

Murukku is a crunchy Indian snack made with rice flour, urad dal bean flour, various fragrant spices that are molded into a spiral coil and deep –fried in sizzling hot oil.

I wait by the boiling stove, staring at the viscous oil froth about in a deep pot, the entire atmosphere is suspended in an intricate net of stifling air. It feels as if the entire kitchen has transformed into the scorching Thar desert of Rajasthan. I perspire profusely through my t-shirt and even the washcloth that I tried using to dab the sweat off my skin, has become obsolete. I must also, like a skilled warrior, try to dodge the drops of oil that bounce out of the pan and threaten to scar my skin.

Making murukkus is no easy task. It takes hours of persistence, patience and mastering of techniques. Yet, despite the toil, having to sit beside a hot stove for hours on end, risking 2nd degree burns and the ultimate possibility of failed murukkus, I know that whatever happens, I am always surrounded by the people I love. The pain, the heat, the sweat instantly evaporates into thin air, the moment my grandmothers, mother, aunts, cousins, and neighbors enter the kitchen. Watching their crinkled-up eyes and listening to them throw their exuberant laughter like throwing a lifebuoy into the ocean, kicks the endorphins in and saves me.

That is what I adore most about making murukkus, the sense of togetherness and camaraderie that we have is marvelous. My dear old grandmothers, the kindest souls you will ever meet, always have remedy on hand in case I were to accidentally burn myself. My mother, never hesitates to teach me, with patience, the proper way to coil murukku paste. My aunt, fearing for my safety, hands me a bottle of water to avoid dehydration, while my

cousins, being the jokesters of the family, never fail to lift my spirits with some witty jokes. My next -door neighbors with the benevolence of their hearts, gather more people to aid in catalyzing the frying process.

Well, there is nothing that I value more than community and relationships. When making murukkus, these values of mine are realized. We are at our best when we are surrounded by people who we know will invariably stand by our side, who are ready to help us in any situation, who we know will take a bullet for you if they must and that is why strong relationships and community is vital, especially in a world where everything is fickle. 2 years ago, when the covid-19 pandemic dawned on the world and pierced an arrow into the flesh of our society, economy, and psychological state of our minds, the world felt wounded.

One of the reasons we can advance and gradually recover in a world like this is because of community, relationships, and compassion. Countries are helping countries by providing vaccines, medical equipment, funding research and much more out of sheer generosity. Amid the Russo-Ukraine War, countries are showing their support to Ukraine by supplying valuable military, humanitarian, and financial aid. People are lending a helping hand through volunteer work, donations, protests, and Ukraine continues in its fight. Community and relationships are the backbone of our world.

When I am making murukkus, the flame of my values is ignited and I am encouraged to live my life by keeping these values in mind. Every day I have created a habit of asking myself a simple question, 'What have I done today to show support for my community?' because it is only when you do something for your community will they reciprocate. I have realized that the best way to reinforce the bonds of relationships is to simply make time. Even if it means 15 minutes in an entire day, I will to the best of my ability try to go for a walk or make a call to show people that I care. Sometimes, the smallest things make a significant difference and by doing so, you will have an entire community that will NEVER let you down. That is the kind of community I know the world wants.