

Malnad will leave you with food memories

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Malnad Mela is here, with a focus on the versatile banana and dishes and products made from it

There's good news and there's bad news. The good first --

Vanastree

's Malnad Mela

is here this weekend in its 10th edition. The bad news is that it will be their last Mela.

Vanastree started over nine years ago when women in and around Sirsi, in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka came together to save native seeds from their region. The theme for this year's Mela is traditional seeds and cuisine, and transformation/healing. What you will find in the Mela in abundance is organic open pollinated seeds, natural foods -- jackfruit and banana chips, chutney pudis and pickles, nelli (amla) lehya and jam, Malnad marmalade, honey, jaggery, Malnad style peanut butter, choco chai, indigo hair colour, kokum butter balm, hand knitted rugs, soapnut scrub, soapberry shampoo powder, up-cycled wood products and more.

"We feel that our limited energies now need to be directed to areas and communities around our home base in Sirsi. We are committed to working with youth farmers in the Chamarajanagar area in the long term. Some of the youth will be at the Mela with their produce, despite the severe drought," says Vanastree founder-trustee Sunita Rao.

The Malnad Kitchen will feature snacks and beverages made on the spot with the spotlight on traditional banana dishes. With the focus of the kitchen on the banana, you can get a taste of banana dosa, banana bonda, banana kadubu, banana sticky-fry, banana shavige, along with Malnad specialities like kashaya, kokum juice, tambli, masala jack papad, sweets and savouries. A whole lot of DIY activities are there -- make art with seeds, discover different soils of Karnataka, make pots, sing folk songs, block print.

Several women farmers from the Vanastree collective will be present to share their food and experiences.

The Malnad Mela is on January 21 and 22 at the Golden Bead School (behind-Big Kids Kemp) Richmond Road, Craig Park Layout, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m..

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