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E-Paper

Temple prasadam to soon have expiry date

CHENNAI: The famed panchmirtham of the [Palani](#) temple is believed to have preservative properties that make it suitable for consumption over a long period, even without refrigeration. But the next time you pay a visit, you will know exactly how long. Prasadam distributed in temples administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department (HR&CE) will soon have the shelf life printed on the containers to comply with the norms of the [Food Safety and Standards Authority of India](#) (FSSAI).

HR&CE officials said the panchamirtham sold at the Dhandayuthapani Swamy Temple in Palani would be the first of the prasadam to have an expiry date.

"We have sent the panchamirtham to the food safety authority for determination of its shelf life. After they issue a licence, we will start printing the date of expiry on the tins marketed at the counters of the temple," a senior HR&CE official told TOI. The food safety department will also test the prasadam of other temples to prescribe expiry dates.

Food handlers who prepare the holy prasadam have been trained to follow the norms of the food safety authority with respect to a host of parameters. Recently, 300 food handlers from 20 major temples across Tamil Nadu participated in a workshop on implementation of food safety and hygiene in places of worship under Project BHOG in New Delhi. The project is one of the safe and nutritious food initiatives launched by FSSAI a year ago.

The HR&CE department administers 36,565 temples in the state. While prasadam is sold across the counter in several temples, others provide it free of cost for devotees. Some popular temple prasadam include dosai at the Kallalagar temple at Madurai, idli at the Varadaraja Perumal temple at Kancheepuram and puttu at the Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple in Madurai.

R Jaya, commissioner of HR&CE, told TOI that the FSSAI licence for panchamirtham was expected within 10 days. "Apart from this, steps are being taken to sell prasadam in eco-friendly containers," she added.