Going back to the basics

Kalyan started his research and development in his own house and self-funded the entire process.

Vellanki Kalyan Chakravarty is on a mission to change people’s food habits for the better. His proposal was awarded the first position at the National Institute of Rural Development’s nationwide start-up conclave recently.

The 39-year-old entrepreneur and hotel management graduate came up with the concept of his start-up Chef Farmers after he saw the amount of food wastage that happens in the hotel management industry while he was a part of it. His aim is to produce 100 per cent millet based food products.

But isn’t the market already flooded with millet and ragi based products? Kalyan explains, “Every millet based product that you see in the market, especially from commercial brands, has only around 30 per cent of millet while the rest of the baking process is done with flour. My research is based on bakery products and malts that are completely free of processed colours or added flavouring. I took my research to ICRISAT, and after testing the products, I was advised to apply for a patent as my products were one-of-a-kind with no additive structures or gums, or any traces of whole wheat and flour.”

Kalyan started his research and development in his own house and self-funded the entire process. When asked why he was not funded by any institute, he says, “The moment you ask an institute to fund your research, they expect the product to be filed under the institute’s name and that is something I disagree with. I showcased my products at the NIRD conclave only because the head of NIRD pushed me to do it. But I plan to donate the entire prize money of Rs 50,000 that I have won for women’s employment and empowerment purposes.”

One of Kalyan’s goals is to provide employment opportunities to rural women. He has also proactively been a part of training female inmates at the Special Prison for Women at Chanchalguda Jail’s bakery unit. “A lot of these women have gone on to start their own bakery shops and units after being released from prison to make a dignified livelihood.” Kalyan’s primary targets in terms of consumers are children and pregnant women. “I want the next generation to be provided with healthier alternatives. Our generation has already grown up on unhealthy processed food and it is too late to reverse the adverse health effects,” he sums up.