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Cooking Indian Food at Home – Where to Start?

By Liz Canham

If you read my article, Curry – A Journey, published on the Curry page of this site, you'll know that

my first experiences of the dish were of the generic variety which the British invariably cooked and ate when living abroad a few decades ago. You'll also know that I then discovered "real" Indian cookery and decided that as I couldn't afford to eat out that much, I needed to learn how to cook the stuff myself.

My first stop then, was a local bookshop, where the choice of books on Indian cookery was somewhat limited. However, I struck lucky and discovered a book called Indian Cookery by Madhur Jaffrey – what a find. Written in simple language but with lovely descriptive text and recommendations on what to serve with what, it was just what I had been looking for.

There was a stumbling block, however, which was the endless list of spices, seasonings and flavourings in the front of the book. I didn't know where to start – I'd heard of quite a lot of them, having watched a few TV programmes on Indian cooking but, "help" I thought, "buying that many all at once is going to cost a fortune". If you're thinking the same, don't panic. Check in your store cupboard. You probably already have some of the items you will need. For example, look for black peppercorns, bay leaves, chilli powder (if you're already a fan of chilli con carne), ground ginger, nutmeg, cloves and cinnamon if you bake cakes or apple pies. Maybe you'll find mustard seeds if you do your own pickling and sesame seeds if you make rolls or cook Chinese food. That only leaves a few basic ingredients which appear in a lot of Indian recipes – cumin, coriander, turmeric and cardamom. Often you need ground cumin and coriander but if you buy the whole spices, you can grind them as necessary (and they keep longer that way too).

The other thing I did was to choose a fairly simple recipe to start with and I just bought the spices I needed for that. The next time I want to cook an Indian meal, I chose another recipe with similar ingredients so I had to just buy a couple more things. Soon enough I built up a whole store cupboard of the things I needed and it didn't have had such a drastic effect on my wallet.

Then there was no stopping me – I even know some recipes by heart now and you can do the same if you want to.

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You don't need special equipment for Indian cookery, although I wouldn't be without my electric coffee grinder (to grind spices) and it's nice (but not necessary) to have the traditional dishes to serve your meal in. Other than that, you need a bit of patience and it's fun to cook with a friend so that you can share the chopping and grinding or have someone read the recipe out to you step by step so you don't go wrong in the middle.

The flavours are great, a curry evening is really sociable, so go on, give it a try.

Liz Canham:

As well as a love of Asian cooking and travel as you can see in her

Asian Food and Cookery

and

Travellers' Tales

websites, Liz seeks to help newcomers to the world of internet marketing with tools,

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Indian Cookery with a British Twist

By Liz Canham

In a traditional Indian home, the wife and mother does not go out to work. She stays at home and spends her days making sure that there is wholesome and tasty food ready for her family to eat whenever they may want it. If there are other older women in the household such as aunts or a grandmother, they will help too.

An Indian girl will start learning to cook at a very early age and will be expected to help her mother with the household catering and cleaning too. At her mother's side a daughter will learn how to grind spices, how to mix them to make various masalas and exactly when and how to add them to individual dishes. She will learn how to make various types of bread – chapattis, rotis, parathas and more. She will learn to make several dishes at the same time, no Indian meal consisting of only one dish, and she will learn the art of producing the crispest deep-fried onion bhajis and pakora. The girl's skill in the kitchen can make the difference between her finding a husband or not.

There's no getting away from it, delightful though Indian cuisine is, producing a meal is a complex and time-consuming business, even for the most experienced Indian housewife.

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That's the traditional way. However, in modern-day India and in Britain, where many Indian families have made their homes, life is quite different.

These days, Indian women often do not have the luxury of staying at home all day. They want or need to go out to work. Indian girls brought up in Britain see other girls of their age going shopping, to parties, to visit friends, to school, to college and ultimately to work and they don't want to stay at home with their mothers, slaving over a hot stove. On top of that, they don't want to lose the culture and flavours of Indian cuisine.

What to do then, when Indian cookery does not provide a quick answer to providing a meal? Vicky Bhogal has found the answer. In her book, *Cooking Like Mummyji*, she explores the culinary problems of a modern Indian girl living in Britain and provides an interesting answer.

I suppose we would call this fusion cooking as it is a mixture of the flavours of India and the simplicity of British family food and the results are great tastes produced in the minimum of time. I particularly recommend Fishcakes with Bite and for Sunday lunch with a difference, Green Masala Roast Chicken – absolutely delicious.

For all your Indian cooking needs why not visit my

<http://www.lizebiz.com/trk.php?c=3308&u=B>

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Food Online Store

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