

COOKING WITH FIRE

BY CARRIE SMITH

“I’ve been teaching for 27 years; I need to have my head examined,” laughs Madhuri Anand, describing her experience teaching Indian cooking at Malaspina College in Duncan.

Anand is teasing, of course. Her love of teaching and her natural affinity for people are as strong now as ever. In fact, Anand’s love of people is one of the key reasons she continues to teach.

“I just love people. People are my life, they energize me, they put life in me,” she says.

It seems the feeling is mutual. Anand is something of a Vancouver Island celebrity. Many of her Indian cooking students return repeatedly to her classes for the pleasure of learning to cook with her. Anand’s different approach makes her a popular teacher.

“I close one eye and put one hand behind my back,” says Anand, recounting her Roti-making demonstration. “I want to say to people, ‘See how easy it is?’ I want to take the fear out of cooking.”

At 73, Anand teaches inspirational cooking classes that draw students from Victoria, Nanaimo and the Gulf Islands, plus she’s written, published and distributed her own cookbook *Authentic Indian Cooking from Madhuri’s Kitchen* – now in its seventh edition.

The book incorporates Anand’s 27 years of cooking knowledge and experience. A definitive guide to Indian cooking, it includes helpful hints, step-by-step instructions, menu suggestions and nearly 200 recipes. The book has been a hit throughout Vancouver Island, Alberta and the United States.

For Anand, *Authentic Indian Cooking from Madhuri’s Kitchen* is more than a book – it has become her life.

“My book has opened a new world for me. It’s my baby,” says Anand. “It has taken me everywhere; it is my life’s work.”

The project has spawned requests for seminars, demonstrations, television appearances, book signings and private lessons. Anand has pared down her teaching commitments to keep up with demands for her exper-



Photo: Walter Lawrence

tise, but she doesn’t mind the busy schedule.

“Once you are retired and your kids are gone, that’s your time now,” she says. “I truly feel this is my time, and I’m just living my dreams.”

Forty years ago when Anand moved to Canada from India, she couldn’t have imagined the course her life would take. The initial loneliness and isolation affected her health so badly she was in and out of hospital. During this time, Anand’s mother sent her a recipe for dodhi (a nerve ton-

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ic with almonds, seeds, milk and honey), and that’s when Anand took matters into her own hands. Combining a holistic Indian diet with a healthy outlook on life, Anand adjusted to her new life and found pleasure sharing her culture with Canadian friends.

“When I cook, I’m not just showing my cooking, I’m showing my culture, who we are,” she says. “I love it!”

Her friends loved it too, and encouraged her to teach adult education classes. Anand agreed to try it and never looked back. She wasn’t content to stop there. She went on to complete degrees in Political Science, Philosophy and English. She has also been successful in the stock market and real estate.

“My friend and I bought our first house together while my husband was home asleep,” giggles Anand. “When I told him what we’d done, he asked ‘Why didn’t you wait for me?’ I said, ‘Because you were asleep.’ He shook his head and said, ‘I was asleep, not dead.’”

Anand’s charm is magnetic and her love for cooking and people stretches beyond the kitchen. Her emphasis on holistic foods that are both tasty and nutritious is a key element to her cooking approach.

“Lots of people feel that Indian food is hot and greasy,” says Anand, “but it’s not supposed to be like that. My specialty is spices, condiments and herbs. I season the food to balance. I cook the way people should be eating.”

For Anand, cooking is more than a hobby – it has become a way to connect with people, care for those she loves and improve the health of those she teaches to cook. With her vibrant personality and wealth of knowledge, Anand teaches her students how the little things in life can create the greatest pleasure.

In Victoria, *Authentic Indian Cooking from Madhuri’s Kitchen* is available at Bolen Books, Munro Books and Chapters. See *Madhuri Anand’s recipe for Makhani Murg (Butter Chicken)* on page 38.



TASTY *Traditions*

BY MADHURI ANAND

Makhan Murg (Butter Chicken)

A long way from home when she emigrated from India, Madhuri Anand combined her talent for cooking with her flare for teaching. Developing authentic Indian cuisine and sharing her culture with Canadians has been her way of life for over 30 years. Today, Anand enjoys international success with her book, *Authentic Indian Cooking from Madhuri's Kitchen*. Read her story on page 2. Offered from her cookbook, the following is one of her special recipes:

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ lbs. skinless, boneless chicken breasts or thighs
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 2 tsp. garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. ginger, grated
- 1 tsp. green chili peppers, chopped
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 2 tsp. garam masala
- 1 cup tomato sauce
- 1 ½ tsp. salt (or to taste)
- 1 cup whipping cream or half & half
- 2 Tbsp. fresh coriander, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. ground cumin, optional (for garnishing)

Method:

Cut chicken into bite-sized pieces. In a saucepan, fry onions in butter until golden. Add garlic, ginger, chili peppers, paprika and garam masala. Fry for a few seconds.

Add chicken, cook and stir until no longer pink. Add tomato sauce and slowly bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes.

Add whipping cream, stir and simmer until chicken is tender. Garnish with fresh coriander and cumin. Serve with naans and cucumber Raita. Enjoy!

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