

# Cooking up Curry

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One Eden Prairie resident introduces her friends to the subtle and sophisticated tastes of Indian cuisine

BY SUZY FEINE // PHOTOS BY TATE CARLSON

Eden Prairie is quite a long way from India, so a great Indian dish with authentic ingredients and flavors is hard to come by for Farida Kathawalla.

Yearning for the flavors of her homeland, Kathawalla knew she either needed to prepare the dishes herself, or seek help from someone who was well-versed in the art of Indian cooking.

When the idea arose to host an elegant curry dinner party to showcase the different regions of India for 30 of her friends who had never tasted authentic Indian cuisine, Raghavan Iyer, a friend, certified culinary professional and fellow Eden Prairie resident, immediately sprang to mind.

Often out of town on book tours or for conferences and events in prestigious banquet halls and hotels across the country, Iyer's expertise on cuisine in general proved to be a natural choice upon his return home to Eden Prairie. He's on the editorial advisory board for *Cooking Light* magazine and writes guest columns for that publication, as well as *Gastronnica*, *Bon Appetit* and *Eating Well*.

His third cookbook, *660 Curries: The Gateway to Indian Cooking*, which just launched in May 2008 to rave reviews and a Best Cookbook of 2008 award by the *New York Times* and National Public Radio, is already in its second printing through Workman Publishing Company; it provided the perfect menu.

“This is a cuisine that is 6,000 years old,” Iyer says. “I think finally the western world is looking toward it for the excitement, the spices.” Kathawalla and Iyer combed through the cookbook and selected a number of appetizer, entrée and dessert recipes to prepare for the intimate dinner party. “Farida's ancestral roots are from the northwest [region of India], so we made recipes created from her native region,” Iyer says.


The two worked together days before the party to marinate the meats and prep the vegetables. “This was the most exciting part for me,” Kathawalla says. “It was the first time I actually cooked with him, and he used a lot of ingredients that I grew up with,



## WHAT'S A CURRY?

Curry powder, as it's known in America, is nonexistent in Indian cooking. "Curry isn't even a word in any of [India's] 23 languages," Raghavan Iyer says. Curries are actually various kinds of sauces seasoned with spices and fresh herbs, the flavors of which European explorers loved so much 400 years ago that they tried to mimic them in their own cooking. The most common of these is ground turmeric, which is a part of American curry powder.






but usually can't find in Minnesota." Iyer's secret shop is The Indian Spice House in Eden Prairie (8445 Joiner Way, 952.942.7510), where he can find such ingredients as smoked garcinia camboge (a family of mangosteen) and screwpine leaves.

The evening of the dinner party, guests feasted on appetizers including Marinated Chicken with a Daikon Radish Sauce, Flame-toasted Lentil Wafers with Kerala-style Avocado Relish, and Crispy Crackers with Unripe Mango and Contrasting Sauces. While guests marveled at the flavor profiles of each dish, Iyer discussed the ingredients and the cooking style of India.

For the main course, Iyer served Spiced Lamb Chops with a Fenugreek Sauce, Wild Salmon Fillets Poached with Chiles, Scallions and Tomato, Fresh Greens with Black-eye Peas, Buttery Basmati Rice with Spinach and Onion, and Chunky Potatoes with Garlic and Peanuts. For dessert, guests enjoyed Cardamom-scented Yogurt Cheese with Tropical Fruits in a Puff Pastry and a Mango Soufflé. Following dessert, Iyer hosted a cookbook signing for those in attendance.

During the dinner party, Kathawalla and Iyer received repeated praise for the phenomenal event, and gratitude from the 30 guests in attendance for the unique cultural experience. "I wanted to familiarize my friends with some very unusual foods, something they've never had before," Kathawalla says. "Iyer helped me introduce a variety of Indian food items to them and opened them up to new, international flavors." 

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**Turn the page**  
for a taste of two of the  
recipes served at Farida  
Kathawalla's Indian soirée.