



Raji Cuisine : Indian Flavors, French Passion

Raji Jallepalli

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When Raji Jallepalli was a child growing up in India, she loved to sneak into the kitchen to carefully observe the cook and ask questions about whatever happened to be on the stove. Her parents discouraged such behavior--since Indian ladies did not cook. With a career in the kitchen unthinkable, Raji immersed herself in a career in microbiology. Years later, she visited France and fell in love with French food and wine. On first tasting the food she thought, "This is nice, but it could use some of the assertive flavors of my homeland as well as some lightening up."

Three important influences--her Indian upbringing, scientific background, and love of French cuisine--inform Raji's cooking and account for her incredible success as a chef, and a self-taught one at that. Her eponymous restaurant, Restaurant Raji in Memphis, Tennessee, was nominated for a James Beard Award in 1996 and 1997 and helped establish Raji as one of this country's hottest culinary stars. She has been called "a major player" by the *New York Times*, and her restaurant was dubbed "one of the most exciting in America" by *Food & Wine*. Raji defines her brand of fusion as "a rather quiet combining of vastly different cultures, philosophies, and cooking techniques." In her kitchen she retains the basic principles and balance of French cuisine while introducing the profound bouquets of Indian cooking. As star chef and Raji fan Charlie Trotter writes in the foreword, "Hers becomes one cuisine--not a melding of two. It is completely natural, there is nothing contrived about it."

All the recipes in *Raji Cuisine* come from Raji's restaurant but are adapted for the home kitchen. A full glossary of Indian spices appears, along with a primer on techniques and notes on choosing wine to accompany Raji's uniquely flavored fare.

Outstanding, easy-to-follow recipes, gorgeous four-color photographs, and Raji's own reflections on her incredible journey to stardom in America's foremost culinary circles--all combine to make *Raji Cuisine* a welcome and remarkable debut from an extraordinary talent.

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