

Q&A

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Yumm's the word!

**AUTHOR AND ACE COOK VIJI
VARADARAJAN ON HOW TRADITIONAL
SOUTH INDIAN COOKING CAN BE MADE
SIMPLE...**

You've authored three books - Samayil, Festival Samayil and Cooking with Yoghurt; the books have just been re-launched...

Yes. I initially authored the books keeping in mind the fact that today's generation is losing out on a an entire culture. When I got married, it was into a traditional South Indian Brahmin family, where they were very particular about the cooking. So while I cooked the 'traditional' way, I also experimented, innovated and thought of ways to make the recipes simpler and more convenient, while retaining the essence of the dish. The books contain these recipes.

Why a re-launch though?

While the first edition of these cookbooks had the recipes made simple for youngsters and working people, the second edition has some additions. For instance, I've given exact proportions for each ingredient. There is no ambiguity at all. Follow the steps correctly, and you can't go wrong! Secondly, the books are all in a paperback format now, and are reasonably priced - accessible to even the lower-middle class. Thirdly, there is a ready reckoner to refer which recipes to try out with a particular ingredient.

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What are the recipes you have focused on?

Traditional Brahmin cuisine is actually a complete three-course meal in itself! So I've included a bit of everything; there are the tiffins - different kinds of idlis, dosas and vadas, then we have the various curries, the different kinds of rice, the sweet dishes... the book Samayil details all this. Festival Samayil has traditional festival offerings made easy. I find that these days, we have no time to actually prepare festival fare, so this book will help. Lastly, cooking with Yogurt, as the name suggests has recipes that are made with yogurt.

What feedback have you received so far for the books?
I've got a lot of positive feedback, especially from

people living abroad. Since my mail ID is in the book, I receive emails directly from them, with comments, queries, suggestions... I reply personally to queries, and a lot of the changes in the second edition, I incorporated based on feedback from them.

MS Swaminathan and Nanditha Krishna mentioned at the launch that South Indian vegetarian food is one of the healthiest cuisines. Did you focus on that aspect as well?

Yes, all the dishes are healthy, with very little oil and fat. It is, in fact, a healthier way of life. And with this book, those pressed for time can whip up tasty and healthy dishes in very little time!