



COOKING UP STORIES

I love cooking up stories (and I like to think I'm pretty good at it).

I also like to cook (although I admit I'm pretty bad at it).

To celebrate the joy I feel that THE BRIDGE HOME is a Global Read Aloud for 2019, I decided I'd take a shot at writing down a recipe for readers to try, so you can get a real taste of India.

That said, I hope that as you prepare the dish below, you'll also be extra careful not to waste it unnecessarily - out of respect for children like Rukku, Muthu, Arul and Viji who have to work everyday so they can have something to eat, and who often don't get enough nutrition.

You'll also find that after my instructions for preparing my favorite dessert, and links to recipes I found on the web for dishes mentioned in THE BRIDGE HOME and suggestions for cookbooks that I've enjoyed using, I've listed questions on the theme of food for you to ponder. I've also suggested some follow up activities you may want to get involved in in order to raise awareness of hunger, which is a global problem. As you may already know, it's not just in India that people - and children - go hungry. Even in my home state of Rhode Island, in the United States, which is considered a wealthy nation, there are children who don't get enough to eat.

So go ahead - enjoy cooking - and discussing - and maybe taking action!

Padma Venkatraman

Author, The Bridge Home



QUICK AND EASY SAFFRON YOGHURT

Below is a recipe I wrote for a way to make my favorite Indian-ish dish. Remember, though, I'm not a chef, so they're really rather basic instructions! And if you have a lactose allergy, try this with lactose-free yoghurt - I'm quite certain it will taste just as good.

Ingredients

Greek yoghurt - 4 cups or one large container (a quart)

Rose water - 4 tablespoons (or more or less depending how much you like the fragrance)

Cardamom powder - 2 teaspoons

Saffron - two generous pinches (or at least one pinch containing several threads)

Castor sugar / finely powdered sugar - To taste, depending how sweet you like it

Instructions

Pour the rose water into a large bowl and place the saffron threads in the rose water. Leave this aside for about 5 minutes at least. You'll notice that the orange-red color of the saffron threads will begin to dissolve into the rose water. When the rose water looks like a drop of sunshine, empty the greek yoghurt into the bowl and mix well. Add the cardamom powder and mix again. Carefully mix in the sugar, taking care that it doesn't clump.

Cover the bowl and set it in a refrigerator for at least 4 hours (or overnight, if you can wait that long). Mix at least a few times.

That's it! Ready to eat!

This is my easy way to make a dessert called Shrikand. No one eats it in THE BRIDGE HOME but I eat it often in my own home!



LINKS TO OTHER RECIPES AND COOKBOOK INFO

Here are some links to recipes I found on the web for dishes that the characters in THE BRIDGE HOME taste.

Payasam: <https://www.chitrasfoodbook.com/2017/04/arisi-paruppu-payasam-recipe-rice-moong.html>

Biryani: <https://www.archanaskitchen.com/chettinad-vegetable-biryani-recipe>

Laddu: <https://www.vegrecipesofindia.com/boondi-ladoo-recipe-boondi-laddu/>

Roti: <https://www.rachnas-kitchen.com/roti-recipephulka-recipe-how-to-make-roti-or-phulka/>

Here are some cookbooks that I've enjoyed using:

Lord Krishna's Cuisine and Yamuna's Table - both written by Yamuna Devi

Sundays at the Moosewood - this has a section with recipes inspired by India.

The Great Greens Cookbook is another that I like to use.

If you are looking for more authentic Indian recipes by famous Indian chefs, try searching under these names: Tarla Dalal, Madhur Jaffrey, and Padma Lakshmi.



TAKE ACTION AFTER YOU EAT!

Would you like to raise awareness about hunger by creating posters for display?

Could you organize a march focusing on a food-related issue that you feel strongly about?

Are there food banks in your community for which you might coordinate a food drive?



QUESTION AS YOU COOK

Consider whether everyone has enough food in your community - why or why not? How can we try to change the world so that hunger is not a global problem? What aspects of national and international economics contribute to hunger?

Do bananas (Rukku's favorite food) cost the same everywhere in the world? Why or why not? How volatile is the cost of food in your country? Why does the cost of food vary? How much do you know about farms, farmers and farming in your country and around the world?

How does food get to your table? How is our world's environment affected when food is transported over long distances? What happens if you try to buy food locally instead?

What is added to food to preserve it so it doesn't spoil during transport? How is your food packaged? What happens to the packaging after you consume the food? How much single-use plastic waste do you create during each meal? Do you know what happens to plastics after they are discarded? Have you ever heard of microplastics or PFAS? Do you think certain chemicals added to food or used in packaging may affect your health?

Find out what "fair trade" means. Do you think it's important to buy fairly traded products?

What does it mean to genetically modify food? Why is this done and how?

What happens when you waste food? In what ways can you help conserve resources as you cook - and even when you shop for food? Do you compost food? Do you recycle and reuse containers? How can reduce the waste you produce? Consider what packaged foods you buy and whether you can avoid buying them in packaging. Carry reusable bags to the market.

What foods are nutritious and what foods are unhealthy? How can we eat healthier food?