

meetingwrap

Canadian Living Test Kitchen *continued*

process starts at least six months before the issue goes to print. The team gathers for a brainstorming session where they consider things like seasonality, themes, trends, and even cost. Assignments are handed out and then the cooking begins.

An important consideration: ingredients must be widely available. "We always ask, 'Can Dorothy in Red Deer get the ingredient in her local grocery store?' If not, the recipe won't be chosen," says Annabelle.

Once the recipe is developed, it's tasted and critiqued. "We must check our feelings and egos at the door," says Adell. "It's about our readers and that's what makes us successful."

Everyone tests each other's recipes and they are modified until they are perfect. The process is very meticulous — everything is measured and checked...and then checked again to make sure the instructions are accurate.

Once recipes are finalized, dishes that are particularly beautiful get photographed for the magazine. Only the most attractive dish gets the honour of being chosen for the cover, making the magazine irresistible at the newsstand.

It's a long process, but the result is a magazine filled with great tasting recipes that Canadian home cooks can count on.

A unique set of skills is required to be on the Canadian Living Test Kitchen team. "In addition to being able to write well, you must be able to blend your creativity with the need to be methodical, careful and detail oriented," says Adell. "You must be able to take criticism and self-critique. And, you can't fudge good cooking skills."

What's next for the Test Kitchen team? According to Annabelle, all sorts of things — from travel to restaurant menus inspire them. "We don't do fads, but we make sure we stay on top of longer term trends," says Annabelle. "That said — the slow cooker isn't showing any signs of going away!"

Did you know...?

- The Canadian Living Test Kitchen team develops and tests over 1000 recipes every year.
- Each team member does her own grocery shopping and dishes.
- Canadian Living uses ordinary household appliances. They use an electric stove and a gas one, but do not use an induction stove.
- Sometimes getting in-season fruit, like peaches can be tricky. For those recipes, they often develop them a full year before the issue goes to print.
- Canadian Living develops recipes using imperial measurements. They say they've ditched metric except for cans, meat pan sizes or anything you might buy in milliliters.
- Their most popular recipes include carrot cake, lasagna, meat loaf and their Peppy Salsa.
- Three ingredients Adell can't live without: olive oil, all-purpose flour and salt.

Saskia Brussaard is the owner of *Crave PR* (www.cravepr.com), a boutique agency that specializes in Food, Wellness, and Lifestyle.

Perseverance. Doing what you truly believe in. A supportive family. These are just some of the secrets of success, according to **Preena Chauhan**, the co-founder of *Arvinda's* artfully created Indian spice blends.

Persevere.

Arvinda's was launched in 2005, however the idea and inspiration date back to the early 90s, when Preena's mother, Arvinda Chauhan taught students how to blend, roast and grind their own spice blends during her Indian cooking classes.

"Students felt it was daunting to do it themselves," says Preena. "My mother soon started selling the spice blends in small pouches."

Flash forward to today and *Arvinda's* has become a successful brand sold by major retailers and specialty stores in Canada and the U.S. They also do custom blending for foodservice (chefs, caterers) and industrial clients. Recently, the products were featured at the AGO Shop for the four month stint of the Maharaja exhibition in Toronto.

Preena confesses that, like any business, there have been challenges along the way, such as educating people about Indian cuisine. "It was (and is) important for us to change peoples' perceptions of Indian cooking. Indian cooking is a complex cuisine and there is much to learn about the technique of using spices correctly."

Packaging was another challenge. Inspired by the traditional Indian masala box or "dabba", some grocery managers were concerned that the tin wouldn't sell if consumers couldn't see the spices.

"We stuck to our guns and didn't change our packaging even when we were faced with rejection from "grocery heavyweights" says Preena.

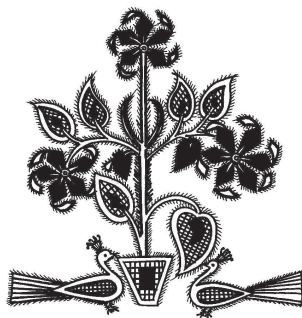
Do what you truly believe in.

Despite some roadblocks, Preena always reminds herself never to give up. "Those retailers who initially didn't list our products finally came around, seeing success in the line in other markets."

Preena also offers this nugget of wisdom: "There will be many people giving you advice on what you should do, but you need to make decisions you are comfortable with and that stay true to your values," says Preena.

Family matters.

Preena attributes much of the success of the business to working with her family. Preena co-owns *Arvinda's* with her brother, Paresh. Together, they designed the



Preena Chauhan

By Saskia Brussaard, *Crave PR*

style tacos!"

Of course, it is Preena's mother who has played the most pivotal role in her success. "It was mother who inspired me to get into cooking," Preena says. "She passed her recipes and knowledge to me, which I'm grateful for. Without my mother's Indian cooking school, we would have never brought these products to market."

Preena believes that Indian cuisine is a trend that is growing. "There is so much more in the Indian repertoire than Butter Chicken and naan," jokes Preena, whose favourite dish is Pav Bhaji, a savoury and spicy vegetable curry mash served with a toasted bun for dipping. "South Indian cuisine is garnering more interest and attention. I believe sustainable and healthy food choices will become even more relevant than they are today."

Through her classes and products, Preena says she promotes local, seasonal and organic wherever possible. Preena did her Masters in Environment Studies (MES) degree at York University. Part of her research was in South India studying organic farming and native Indian vegetables. Preena, a recipient of the Local Food Hero Award given by the Toronto Food Policy Council, will be joining the Council in May 2011.

To learn more about *Arvinda's*, go to www.arvindas.com. To read about Preena's favourite dish, Pav Bhaji, an Indian street food, go to Preena's blog, www.ATeaspoonOfTurmeric.com.

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packaging and set up the manufacturing facility. "Both of us bring something unique to the table," says Preena. Her father, now retired, has been a huge supporter, as has her mother, Arvinda, who continues to teach Indian cooking classes together with Preena.

As an entrepreneur, Preena wears many hats. "One day I may be teaching a cooking class, another day at a trade show and another day I'm roasting and grinding spices. I never get bored." Preena is a busy woman. She shares her culinary knowledge of Indian cuisine as a guest lecturer at the Niagara Culinary Institute at Niagara College; runs culinary tours to India with a focus on spice production and local, regional Indian cooking and culture; and runs walking tours of Toronto's Little India.

Preena gathers inspiration from other food professionals, chefs and cooks. "I love hearing how they use *Arvinda's* Indian spice blends in incredible ways, such as Punjabi-

hotflash Cuisine Canada hosts the Canadian Culinary Book Awards at the Royal Winter Fair annually in November. Many of the members of the WCN have been involved in our various activities, either as judges, chefs, authors, or volunteers. Your participation and support have been invaluable, to say the least.

This year we are looking to establish new partnerships with industry and to add to our sponsorship roster. If you know of a potential contact to support the project, either in-kind, with donations of products, or through a sponsorship opportunity, please contact Karen Baxter at kgerling@uoguelph.ca. If you would like to hear more about our activities and partnership needs, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Happy spring to all.

hotflash Resa Lent returned from Paris and the *Desert Rose Cafe Cookbook* placed 3rd at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in the Best Vegetarian Cuisine Book 2010 category. First place was won by Rose Elliot who has written 55 cookbooks and second was Alain Passard, a 3 star Michelin chef, so the book is in excellent company.

hotflash Recently launched Cookbooks from WCN members:

Everyday Flexitarian by Nettie Cronish & Pat Crocker (Whitecap Books)

Healthy Starts Here! by Mairlyn Smith (Whitecap Books)

The New Food Processor Bible by Norene Gilletz (Whitecap Books)

Norene's Healthy Kitchen: Eat Your Way to Good Health by Norene Gilletz (Whitecap Books)

Member news is always welcome!

email Carolyn at carolyn@womensculinarynetwork.org

WCN Member Food Travels

February 2011: Buenos Aires, Argentina by Mary Lou Morgan

Take one strand of spaghetti, cook for 8 minutes. Cut in half. Fold again and twist. This is the size of the delicious medialunas served with your café con leche in the morning. Buenos Aires, a city of 14 million, is a very, very thin society, people eating mostly steak and salad for supper. In the supermarket potato chips are \$3.00 Canadian, and an avocado is 25 cents.

On our first day, clutching an address, we took a taxi to a vacant lot full of construction. Behind all the trucks, as promised, was a wholesale gourmet market. We stocked up on wine for the month and hauled it back to our apartment. Friendly neighbours recommended an inexpensive restaurant serving regional specialties, empanadas and a wonderful Latin version of shepherd's pie.

Although we cooked most of our meals we did treat ourselves to a typical Argentinian dinner, in an old restaurant downtown called La Chacra. It is like an old hunting lodge. There was a huge fire on the floor and meat is propped up and cooking around the fire. One chef with a huge knife rules this space. Rare tenderloin with a mustard sauce and the most wonderful French fries with garlic were memorable.

We walked through a beautiful Andean village called Tilcara and found it both primitive and urbane at the same time: a baker, probably trained in Paris, making alfajores, the local cookie which is a little sandwich with different fillings; Andean women on the street selling exquisite humitas and stews and others cooking over a

IN MEMORY OF ELIZABETH ROSALIND HARRIS 1943 - 2011

In March of this year many communities lost a champion in the passing of Elizabeth Harris. Long time Cabbagetown resident, wife of John Murtagh and mother to Patrick, Anna and Tim, Elizabeth was a mover and shaker who made incredible differences in the lives of so many.

She is fondly remembered as "Madame Harris", having been the French teacher at the neighbourhood elementary school for some 30+ years. Many of her students were new Canadians, some resided in Regent Park and had little means. Through diligent fundraising, Elizabeth managed to organize hockey teams and equipment for her students and did many language exchanges with her classes. The destinations included Tadoussac, Quebec and France!

Good food has always been important to Elizabeth, evident in her famous American Thanksgiving events. Once retired from teaching she founded "The Friends of Riverdale Farm" as a means to improve the on-site facilities in an authentic manner. She got the wood-burning oven built and baked pizzas and bread, she started the canteen, got "The Shop at the Farm" up and running. She pioneered the farmers' market at Riverdale Farm, organized the annual Friends of the Farm dinner — a sit down dinner on china for some 80+ people on the premises, held outside weather permitting. Shortly after that she opened up the Brickworks Market.

Elizabeth's "Celebration of Life" ceremony welcomed more than 500 people from so many of her communities: past students, politicians, neighbours, chefs, farmers...all of them her friends. She was a true inspiration and powerhouse. The lesson that she lived was that with passion, determination and persistence things can happen, no dream is too big. May we all learn from her example

Anita Whyte is a fellow Cabbagetowner, past board member of Friends of the Farm and friend of Elizabeth's.

fire — a piece of dough folded over a piece of ham and a slice of local cheese; women selling small piles of potatoes; lots of flowers, wonderful crafts and sophisticated restaurants and music.

Since coming home I bought Francis Mallman's Seven Fires, Grilling the Argentine Way, tried out recipes on friends, read about the culture of yerba mate and am still seeking a recipe for the 4-5 inch thick tortas we had for lunch.

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