



# Dig in, without the sin

Madhu Gadia shows **Arthur J Pais** how healthy food can be finger-licking tasty

**F**or years, Madhu Gadia, a certified dietician and diabetes consultant, has been demonstrating in her cooking classes, speaking engagements and books that healthy food does not have to be tasteless.

"You start eating with your eyes first," says Gadia, the author of the newly published book *The Indian Vegan Kitchen*. "Food should also smell good, and then having aroused a few senses, it should also taste very good, and make you healthy."

Her new book, with 150 recipes that can be cooked in 30 to 45 minutes, is published by a division of Penguin.

Gadia, who lives in Ames, Iowa with her husband, brings to the book 25 years of experience. Her previous work, *New Indian Cooking*, published 10 years ago, received good reviews, with *Bon Appetit* magazine praising her for streamlining "traditional recipes for a variety of classic dishes from her native India. The result is all the appealing flavors with much less fat."

Her recipes have also been featured in *The Oprah Magazine*.

Gadia, who earned a bachelor's degree in home science from G B Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, now in the north Indian state of Uttarakhand, has a master's degree in food and nutrition from the University of Illinois, Urbana

The recipes in the new book are inspired by the foods from many Indian regions. The plantain stew, for instance, is from the south. There are also recipes Gadia has created, like tofu curry, and flaxseed or spinach flatbread.

#### Why did you write this book?

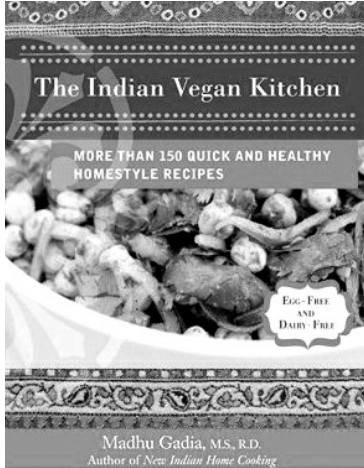
There are any number of books on vegetarian cooking but I noticed there wasn't an Indian cookbook written with scientific details for vegans. There are also many people who have become vegans for ethical or health reasons.

#### But the book is not just for vegans.

Certainly not. I am not a vegan but many people including non-vegetarians may want to cook not only a vegetable or two with their



Madhu Gadia



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meals many times a week, and a vegan dish now and then. I also show that we can prepare nutritious and tasty dishes without using milk or ghee. Even those who are using milk products in their food may start wondering after reading my book and trying out its recipes if they are not over using dairy products. I have also included products that use soy milk and tofu.

**The book could also benefit Indian home cooking.**

Surely. I have noticed over the years that many Indians are eating less and less vegetables. They have rice or Chapatti with Dal. This book encourages them to cook fast, tasty vegan food.

**How did you start enjoying vegetarian food?**

I grew up a vegetarian in India, though I am not an exclusively a vegetarian now. I came to America before I was a teenager with my father Vimal Kishore Gupta, who worked on his doctorate here. We went back to India and he continued inspiring me to eat fresh vegetables and cook them in such a way that their nutritional value remained high. My mother Satya Vati Gupta never gets tired of about food. She is a real foodie and I consult her often.

**What can a book like yours do compared to other books?**

One of the reasons I wrote this book is that many people who are

vegetarians are not eating healthy. Either they make their dishes bland or laden with cheese, cream and eggs, making them high in fat and saturated fat. Many such meals are not healthier than the meat-based dishes. Because of this many vegetarians including vegans are turning to ethnic food. I must also say that I believe in using spices delicately. I have an article coming out in *Vegetarian Times* and the editor wondered why there not many spices in the recipes. But they were very happy when they followed my recipe. I believe that spices should be used to enhance the flavor. My book also offers at the end of each recipe an analysis of the content including the calorie and fat count.

**What are some of the differences between Indian and American vegetarians?**

Many Americans who have switched onto vegetarian or vegan diet judge a vegetarian meal by how closely it resembles a non-vegetarian meal. Some want to know if the meal is going to be as gratifying as mom's meat loaf, mashed potatoes, and green beans without the meat loaf. On the other hand, Indian vegetarians or vegans are not trying to make a meatless meal look and taste like a meal with meat. Indians know that a vegetarian meal — with or without dairy products — can be tasty and hearty and also nutritionally balanced. It has a flair and distinction of its own. ■

**Kitchen tips**

Buy the vegetables from farmer's markets; don't keep eggplant or green beans in a refrigerator for more than a week, as they get soggy. On the other hand, cabbage and potatoes remain in good condition up to two weeks. At times, frozen vegetables work out better than something that has stayed in the refrigerator for a week.

'As my book shows, you can cook delicious food in less than 30 minutes, Monday through Friday,' says Madhu Gadia. 'I cook a few elaborate things during the weekend.'

She finds a good and powerful blender very useful in the kitchen. But some people prefer coffee grinders. Don't use it to grind the spices, unless you want to have spicy coffee, she writes in the book. 'Buy a separate coffee grinder for spices,' she notes, 'as it is the most-effective way of grinding whole spices.'

She has many thoughts on deep frying in her new book.

'The most important factor in deep frying is to maintain the right temperature for the food,' she writes. 'For example, Puris fried on high heat will soak up less fat than if they were fried on medium heat.'

**Baked Fish with Black Pepper**

The following is one of my favorite recipes, adapted from Gadia's previous book *New Indian Home Cooking*. I make the dish with king or tile fish, with sea salt and olive oil and garnish it with mint or coriander leaves. I also sprinkle a teaspoon of minced green chilies. It is one of the most alluring and yet so simple of the dishes found in her book.

Preparation: 5 minutes, and 20 minutes for marinating  
Cooking: 20 minutes  
Serves: 4

**Ingredients**

- 2 lb fish fillets
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 teaspoons vegetable or olive oil

- 1 tsp salt, sea salt preferred
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp turmeric
- Mint or coriander leaves for garnishing.

Optional, 2 tsp of green chilies, finely minced

**Method**

Place the fish in a bowl, sprinkle with the salt, turmeric, cumin powder, black pepper and garlic, turning to coat well. Cover and marinate for 20 minutes at room temperature or longer in the refrigerator.

Preheat the oven to 400F. Coat the bottom of a baking dish with the oil. Place the fish in a single layer and pour the marinade over it. Bake uncovered for 20 minutes or until the fish is firm to the touch and easily flakes with a fork. Sprinkle with lemon juice and garnish with mint or coriander leaves, and the green chilies.

Nutritional information per serving: Calories 119, Carbohydrate 0g, Fat 2.5g, Saturated fat 0.5g, Dietary fiber 0g, Protein 22g, Cholesterol 40 mg, Sodium 315mg.

**Bean Burgers**

Preparation: 10 minutes  
Cooking: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

**Ingredients**

- 16-ounce can chickpeas
- 4 whole wheat hamburger buns
- 4 tomato slices, garnish
- 4 onion slices, garnish
- 2 teaspoons ginger, peeled and grated
- 2 tsp green chilies, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp cilantro, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp bread crumbs
- 2 tbsp canola or vegetable oil
- 1 tbsp lemon or lime juice
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup scallions (white and green parts), finely chopped
- Cilantro chutney,

- optional
- Tomato ketchup,

optional

**Method**

Drain and rinse the chickpeas. Grind them in a food processor until the beans are smooth.

In a medium mixing bowl, combine ground beans, scallions, carrots, ginger, cumin, salt, green chilies, cayenne pepper, lemon juice, cilantro, and bread crumbs. Mix well.

Oil your palms and make four patties. Set aside.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil on medium high heat in a large skillet. Add patties and grill on each side for 5 to

7 minutes until golden brown.

Add a little more oil to brown the patties.

Meanwhile, lightly oil the buns and grill in a fry pan or a griddle until light brown.

Place a patty on the bottom half of the bun, top with tomatoes, onions, cilantro chutney, and tomato ketchup.

Note: You can make the patties up to one day ahead and grill them when ready to eat.

Nutritional information per serving: Calories, 311; total fat, 11 grams (saturated fat, 1 gram), carbohydrates, 45 gram; protein, 11 grams; fiber, 10 grams and sodium 679 grams.

— Arthur J Pais

