

# A VERY GLOBAL HOLIDAY

WORDS Steve Cooper PHOTOS Tobin Bennett

**THE WORLD CELEBRATES FROM LATE FALL TO EARLY WINTER, WHETHER IT'S FOR CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR'S, DIWALI OR SOME OTHER OCCASION. EVERYWHERE, FAMILIES COME TOGETHER TO EAT, TO GIVE AND TO HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE. GET A GLIMPSE INTO FIVE MIDWESTERN HOMES AND SEE HOW MUCH WE SHARE IN COMMON, DESPITE THE DIFFERENCES IN OUR HOLIDAYS.**



Holidays are celebrated worldwide this time of year. Each observance has its own origin, language, music, food, decorating and expectations. The celebrations are different in many ways, but look closer and you'll see they have many things in common. *Hy-Vee Seasons* worked with a diverse group of Midwesterners to share their special holidays and help others better appreciate some of the special occasions dear to our neighbors. Look for the common elements in five celebrations that make this time of year so special.

## **COMING TOGETHER**

Special gatherings of extended family and close friends are a time to swap family information and lore. Who has given birth lately and who has died? Who has made a career advancement and who has hit on hard times? It's a time for children to listen

and absorb, a time for the elders to pass on family values and traditions, and a time for everyone to remember loved ones.

## **BOUNTIFUL AND DELICIOUS FOOD**

Food and beverages, in generous supply, are an important part of celebrating. Hosts and hostesses want everyone at the table to be satisfied and well-fed. Cooks in the family hope to please everyone at their table. The celebrations that follow represent Asia, Africa, Europe and America, featuring our Midwest families' favorite fare and beautiful tables.

## **SHARING GIFTS**

Though we differ in how much is given, people everywhere share the impulse to delight their families with gifts. It's widely believed that it's better to give than to receive.



*“SINCE WE ARE NOT BACK HOME, WE TRY TO MAKE DIWALI HERE EVEN MORE FESTIVE. I’VE HAD AS MANY AS 50 PEOPLE CELEBRATING AT MY HOUSE.”*

---

**MENU**

**SAMOSAS**  
Fried Indian Dumplings  
Filled with Potatoes and Peas

**CILANTRO CHUTNEY**

**DIPPING SAUCE**

**KADDU**  
Sweet-and-Sour  
Winter Squash Stew

**KADAI PANEER**  
Farmer’s Cheese Chunks  
in a Spicy Tomato Sauce

**MATAR PULAO**  
Rice with Peas

**CHOLE**  
Spicy Sautéed Chickpeas

**PURI**  
Fried Bread

**GULAB JAMUN**  
Milk Curd Fritters  
Soaked in Sweet Syrup

**WATER**

**O**n the darkest October night each year, Diwali—the festival of lights in India—reaches its crescendo as the nation celebrates New Year’s. When the night sky turns black, Indians cheer the triumph of light over darkness, and families fill their homes with lights to symbolize the victory.

For Madhu Gadia, a registered dietitian and author of Indian cuisine cookbooks who now lives in Iowa, this is a favorite time of the year. Hy-Vee Seasons spoke with Madhu about how she celebrates Diwali.

**Q: WHEN DID YOU COME TO THE U.S.?**

A: I was 12 years old when I came here with my family from the northern India state of Haryana. My father had come to work on his doctorate.

**Q: HOW IS DIWALI CELEBRATED IN YOUR HOMETOWN?**

A: It was primarily a family time—the biggest festival of the year. It was a time to cook, clean the house and welcome family into our homes. Neighbors would come one by one to our house with their families to wish us a happy Diwali and we served sweets to welcome everyone.

**Q: WHAT FOODS ARE ON YOUR TABLE AT DIWALI?**

A: I spend three to four days, if not a week, getting the food ready and making the dishes for the meal. Food at Diwali is always vegetarian, even meat-eating Indians will not serve any meat or anything animal, except for milk. I make sweet-and-sour *kaddu*. It’s my personal

favorite way of cooking winter squash. Pumpkin is *kaddu* in the Hindi language. It’s served mashed. If pumpkin is not available, you can use butternut squash.

Another main dish we make is *matar pulao*, which is rice with peas. A newer cheese dish called *paneer* has become very popular. A modern dish, it has become a favorite the last 40 years because you can buy it in stores. We also have *puri*, a fried bread that makes any meal a celebration. Everyone—young or old—loves *puri*. It seems wrong to call this deep-fried bread a flatbread, because it puffs up like a balloon in the hot oil, but within seconds it loses its steam and gently falls flat.

**Q: WHAT ABOUT DESSERTS?**

A: For every offering you give to God, there are sweets involved. So sweets are a huge part of the celebration. And in a way, Diwali is just like Christmas, which has its cookies, cakes and pies. During Diwali the amount of sugar you take in quadruples compared to other times of year. Even though everything is loaded with sugar, you keep eating it over all three weeks of Diwali.

**Q: HOW IS DIWALI DIFFERENT HERE IN THE U.S. THAN IT WAS IN INDIA?**

A: The big difference is that in India, Diwali is in the air. For a month before Diwali, you see it in every shop, every corner has something that says Diwali is coming and there are firecrackers being sold for two or three weeks ahead of time for use during Diwali.



KADAI PANEER



MATAR PULAO



GULAB JAMUN