

# Pongal goes to France!



South Indian cuisine goes to France as Viji Varadarajan and Sophie Jirost co-author a translation of Viji Varadarajan's Gourmand Award-winning recipes

While Sophie Jirost was finding her way through a vegetable market in Chennai, she ran into Viji Varadarajan, popular cookbook author. While Viji is best known for her bestseller, *Samayal*; Sophie is a fitness instructor from France who believes in healthy eating. "Viji told me that she was the author of a cookbook and we exchanged numbers," says Sophie, recalling their acquaintance. "When I was going to France for the Gourmand Awards, we got talking again."

It has been a whirlwind of cooking demos and translations since then. "This book was really a breeze to put together," says Viji. "For the French, presentation is king, which is why most of the dishes have been photographed on white plates and glass dishes," says Sophie. "I think this is a pioneering effort. I don't know of many

French translations of South Indian cookbooks," says Viji, who is visibly enthused.

The book is titled *Saveurs et Traditions du Sud de l'Inde* (The Taste and Traditions of South India) and the co-authors have roped in Alliance Française of Madras to help them launch the book at its premises on March 22. With plans of translating more of Viji's recipes, Sophie Jirost has an elaborate journey charted out for her new-found cuisine. "I love to cook," she says. "I don't like routine cooking but I love cooking new and interesting kinds of food, which is why discovering South Indian cuisine has been so much fun. It's simple, it's healthy and one gets all the flavours. This has been a very enriching experience for me," she ends.

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