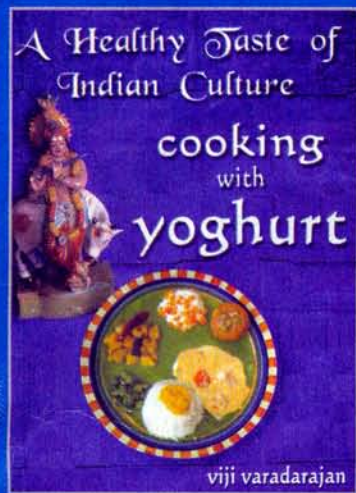


Dollops of Yoghurt!

Viji Varadrajan's new book gives readers a host of delicious Tam-Bram yoghurt recipes...



VINITA NAYAR

A good cook book requires certain ingredients to make it a success with readers. These include, but obviously, a good selection of menus, lucid (read easy), step-by-step instructions (no heavy paragraphs which one has to plod through and make sense of!), ingredients listed in different languages so a reader sitting in Delhi doesn't wonder what *vendayam* is...! And a generous seasoning of mouth-watering colour photographs of dishes that make the reader want to instantly try out the recipe!

Viji Varadrajan's *A Healthy taste of Indian Culture - Cooking with Yoghurt*, fits the bill. This slim volume is dedicated to the wonders of curd, that staple much-loved Indian favourite,

especially down South, where a meal would be incomplete without a healthy dollop of curd or a generous helping of *thayir saadam*. As Viji puts it, "Curds, *thayir, moru, majjige* are important words in the language of an Indian... The word 'curds' - a common usage in India, is inextricably associated with culture, social practice, religion and food."

Her book is an attempt to 'bring together a range of recipes from the Tam-Bram kitchen'. And one must appreciate the effort. There are a whole variety of recipes under various categories starting with *Pachadis* or *Raithas*, going on to *Karis*, then Main Course Dishes, Last Course Dishes, Tiffins and finally Desserts - covering almost the whole gamut of a full-course meal. The recipes are easy-to-follow with clear

directions. And for those not well-versed in Tamil, each dish is translated into English.

The book is handy even for those whose cooking skills are at the novice stage, because ingredients and quantities are listed clearly at the beginning, followed by step-by-step instructions. It's tough to go wrong! At the bottom of the page, for most recipes, she gives suggestions for the accompaniments for each dish.

Other little touches that help, even for seasoned cooks, are the *Timely Tips*. Viji has even included two pages on *Important Tips for Cooks*, which are very helpful, especially for those who are just learning the ropes. The last two pages, on glossy paper, have illustrations of many ingredients with their names in English, Hindi and Tamil - another very useful

addition. However, nowhere does she specify how many people each dish serves. For novices and seasoned cooks alike, this can be a bit baffling!

The pages are laid out well and are appealing to the eye. The motif of Lord Krishna (he loved curd, remember?) is an apt symbol that runs through the pages of the book. The colour illustrations of dishes are attractive, making these simple everyday dishes look appetising, and almost exotic!

If it's exotica you are looking for, then this book will disappoint. But if you'd like to master a range of curd recipes from the South, this is a cherished companion.

Viji Varadrajan: *A Healthy Taste of Cooking - Cooking with Yoghurt is priced at Rs195 and is available at all leading bookstores and Amazon.com*

COOK NOOK

