

# Tamilian Cuisine Comes Alive

**COOK NOOK**

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The daily cooking recipes of a vegetarian household, *Vegetarian Samayal of South India* by Viji Varadarajan is into its fourth edition and the book seems to be the best kept secret of local bookshops. Well! All you moms out there who are bidding adieu to your offspring - both son and daughter - who are off to foreign shores in search of extra qualifications, jobs or married lives can breathe easy. This book and its companion, *Festival Samayal*, are suitable substitutes for your ladled hand in teaching the nuances of hard-core vegetarian cooking to novices.

Generations of cooks had to depend on the archaic measures and steps of a pioneer's work, *Samaithu Paar* or its English version, *Cook and See*. The now-gen can refer to this handy book with easy-to-cook recipes and easier-to-get ingredients. The nicest thing is you can throw the book any which way on your counter top or kitchen drawer and cupboard and not get heart burn - not the kind from the aftermaths of hearty eating, but from worries about it being smudged or book-marked with grease and *haldi!* The books are user-friendly, not coffee table productions and easily replaceable because of the low pricing.

The books have visually appetising photos shot by VK Rajamani. The presence of a religious icon in every photo reiterates the Indian concept of food being associated

with the divine. Important tips for modern cooks and kitchens, a compendium of dishes that can be made from different vegetables, a menu plan for lunch and tiffin or dinner, an important glossary of ingredients and their uses make it a comprehensible cookbook. Introductions to each chapter give thumbnail descriptions and tips like the intensity of the flame, the association of the dish to religion and other interesting tidbits.

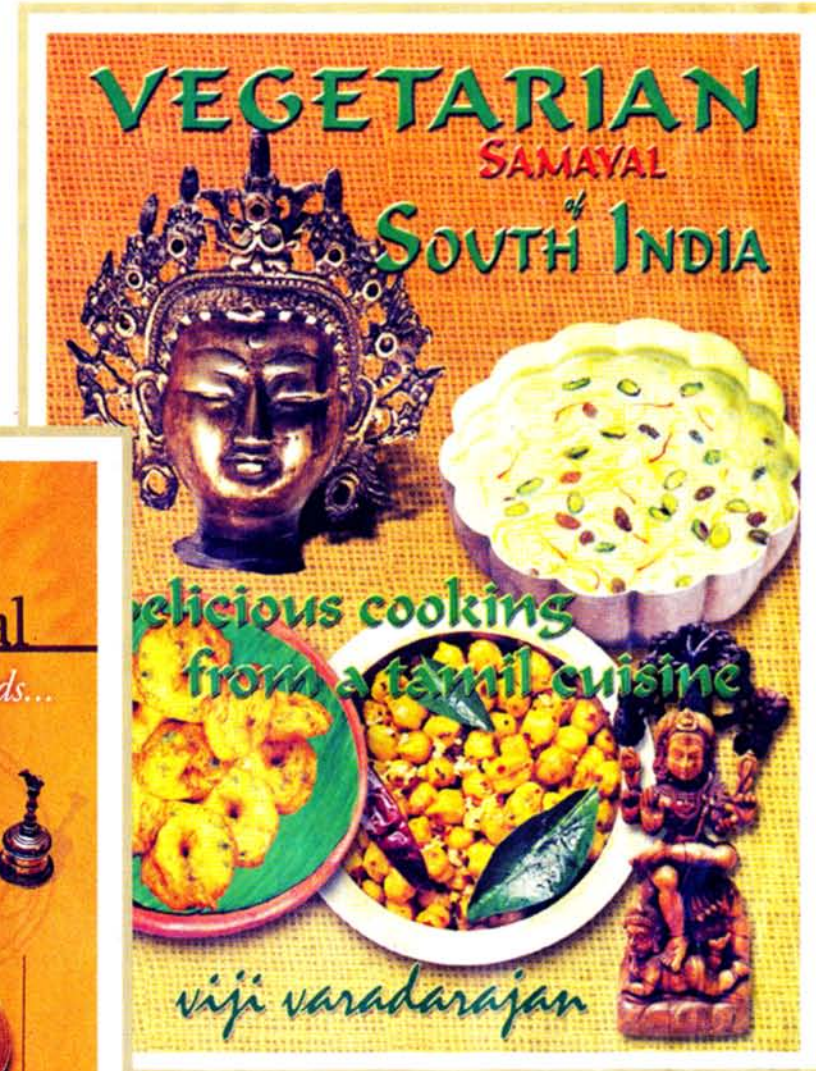
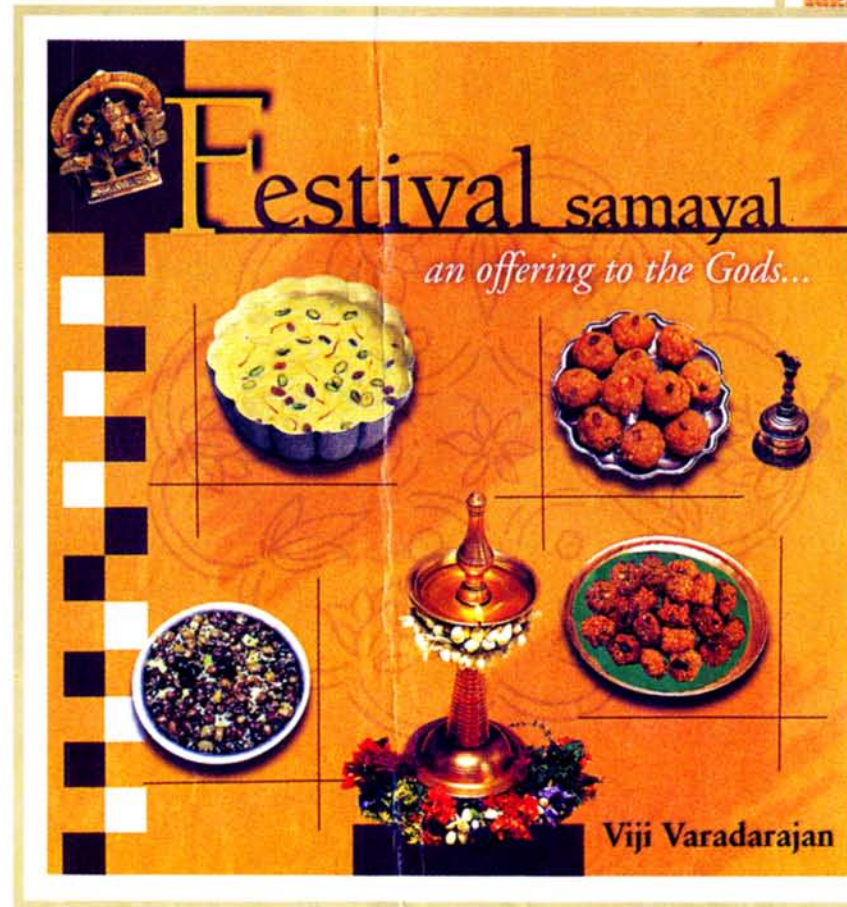
*Festival Samayal* describes the progression of the various festivals in a calendar year and then lists the different dishes that are mainly cooked on special occasions. It is a ready reckoner for young families who want to keep alive the traditions for their children.

The dishes are also linked to a healthy lifestyle that is the modern day holy grail.

A glossary of the festival and the dishes appropriate for each one could have been given to facilitate the cooking schedule of a hard-pressed-for-time chef who now has to thumb through the pages and search for recipes. Typos and indexing could have been perfected.

In these books you can enjoy new recipes or rediscover dishes that you used to eat when you were young and have lost in the mists of corporate, urban life.

The books, priced at Rs 270, are available at all leading bookstores, Nilgiris, Amazon.com etc.



Viji Varadarajan's vegetarian cookbooks are a treasure trove for those wanting to cook up traditional dishes