
THREE NEW EDIBLE READS

BY CHERYL KOEHLER

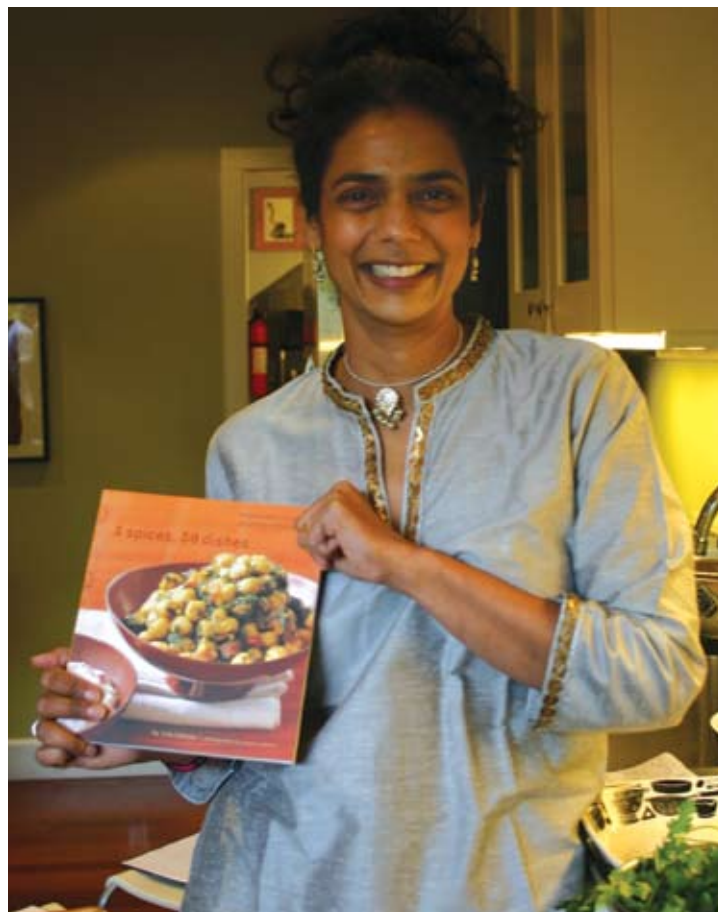
SIMPLY SPICED

About a year ago, I became interested in cooking Indian food for the first time in my foodie life. Fresh ground turmeric and whole mustard seeds joined my spice collection, and the coriander, cumin, and cayenne jars started to need regular refilling. While this situation was new to my kitchen, I was amused to learn that I had fallen in with a trend; East Bay chef and cooking teacher, Ruta Kahate, confirmed that interest in cooking and eating Indian food has been growing.

The discussion came about as Kahate was entertaining 14 members of the local food press in her Oakland home on the last day of May. The evening cooking class marked Kahate's return to the role of teacher after a year hiatus. "I was birthing a baby and a book," she said, adding that her husband was minding the baby and four-year-old upstairs leaving her free to mind 28 hands in her kitchen.

We made light work of seven delectable dishes from Kahate's book, *5 spices, 50 dishes: simple indian recipes using five common spices*, which is this chef's answer to those people with kids, jobs, etc. who say they are too busy to cook anything as complicated as Indian food. "While the ingredients and steps are simple, you'll find the results are anything but," she explains in the book's introduction.

So there we were ready to see for ourselves. In spite of our vast numbers and the effects of the pre-class libation, none of us succumbed to the fire or the newly sharpened knives. Kahate stayed



cool as our version of her crunchy cucumber salad with crushed peanuts, giving expert guidance that mirrored the clarity of the book's instructions.

The five spices of the book's title—coriander seeds, cumin seeds, mustard seeds, ground cayenne, and ground turmeric—are easy to track down in most any supermarket, but urging us to use our noses to note the pungency of fresh spices, Kahate said to take advantage of our many East Bay ethnic markets and natural food stores to restock spices we may have kept too long on our shelves.

"I bring mine back from India," she noted. By the end of a truly enjoyable evening, I'm sure there was hardly a person in the room who was not feeling tempted to sign up for her next culinary tour of India in order to do the same.

5 spices, 50 dishes: simple indian recipes using five common spices
By Ruta Kahate
Chronicle Books, 2007

www.rutaruta.com



Photos by Cheryl Koehler

A BOWLFUL OF VERSE

Anyone who reads cookbooks for entertainment knows that we don't actually have to make a dish to enjoy it—sometimes we just want to daydream. A recipe read in this frame of mind roams like a song or poem through our thoughts, altering the flavor, the color, the sounds of a moment, reminding us how emotions and memories inevitably become fused with every recipe we follow through our kitchen.

Oakland poet Nina Lindsay gives us her first full collection of poems as *Today's Special Dish*—a book any cookbook reader could

enjoy for bedtime reading. In fact, it's just the right length for the wind-down set of hours, and its structure seems to mimic the evening's recap of a busy day—the morning commute, a lunchtime art gallery visit, late afternoon gardening, dinner preparation—where the sensual and the practical melt into one another. Good poems such as these can work like recipes—guides for making meaning out of the simple acts of living.

Today's Special Dish

By Nina Lindsay

Sixteen Rivers Press, 2007

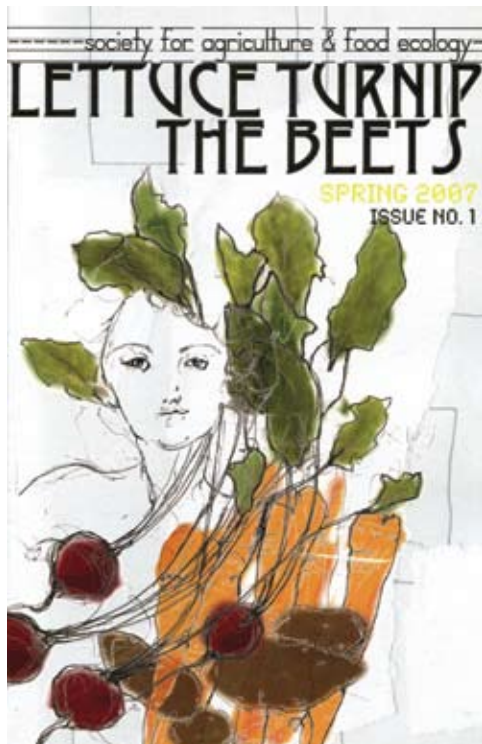
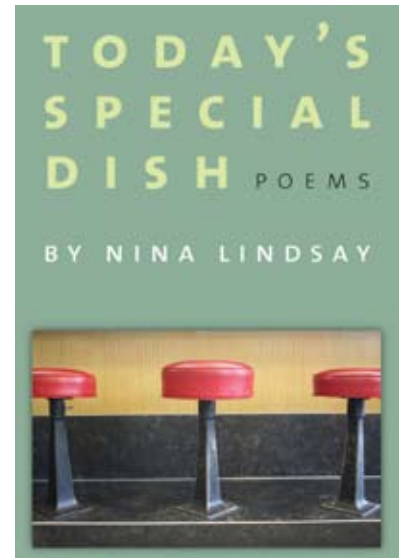
The sauce

Plump red globes just picked, halved and tossed in oil and salt—roast them long and slow. Press through the mill—no skin or seed—just flesh and juice warm as earth—

Or minced root and stem, sweet in the pan. Add wine, the broth from shells. More and less, like sun eked thin on the long flank of earth—not quite gone—pink and gold and full of its own salt, and not much else—

Or tear the leaves in strips, with oil and salt, plump seed, gored bulb. Crush so it all bleeds green, like bits of shell left in the tide, like a storm, like its smell, like the slick and foam-pocked skin of sea—

Just taste. There should not be too much. Fork and bread, tongue and salt. It should fill your dreams and raise the sea. It should be enough.



A NEW GARDEN OF READIN'

Just as the school year was winding down, a staff of scribes, constructors, sustenance finders, and information bees on the UC Berkeley campus completed the lovely first issue of a new food magazine. Within its 20 pages, *Lettuce Turnip the Beets* offers original and astute commentary, poetry, recipes, advice, and directions on how students (and others) can join the growing sustainability movement.

Calling themselves The Society for Agriculture and Food Ecology (SAFE) the instigators of this publication take the discussion beyond the classroom into daily life, advocating cooking, gardening, and recycling in addition to simply knowing what a healthful local food system can look like. Their beautiful little 'zine becomes a timely document to these efforts within the campus environment.

Editor Lulu McClellan admitted that the business plan had not considered how to distribute the 500 copies on a newly deserted summer campus, but it surely will find plenty of takers at "the local," a co-operatively created farmstand on campus, which can be found at the Kroeber fountain (Bancroft and College) on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

McClellan says, "the local offers beautiful organic produce gathered from local farmers and brought to you at cost by your friends. Come check it out, get some veggies, pick up a 'zine, and help out if you can!"

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