

## GOURMET RECIPES

## Flavours of India and the World!

The way most people refer to "Indian food" is rather like describing American cuisine as hamburgers and fries, or Irish as corned beef and cabbage. You get the picture, and we did too after reading Meena Pathak's *Flavours of India*. This new book is her personal collection of authentic Indian recipes from all over the huge sub-continent, and we found that they vary widely depending on the origin and location. Meena Pathak knows more than most about this delicious subject, as she is Director of Product Development for Patak's, the international Indian food company. Patak's is a great story of immigrants to England in the 1950s who made very good, thank you, by starting out selling samosas and snacks from their home. They flourished, and today the business is worldwide with a long line of products and authentic ingredients including breads, pickles and those wonderful chutneys.



Cookbooks are utterly international and cross-cultural today, with seemingly every cuisine represented in recipes. The author may be from Britain, British Columbia or Colombia; the recipes could have special ingredients from each of these places, or anywhere else for that matter.

Problem is... what on earth are some of these ingredients that they're talking about? Garum masala? Ground amchoor? These days we all need a food dictionary, and our favourite is *International Dictionary of Gastronomy*, by Guido Gómez de Silva. Hot off the press, it's full of listings from *abacaxi* (Portuguese for pineapple) to *zwieback* (German for twice baked). Gomez de Silva worked in 69 countries as a UN official, and ate his way through them all. He's been gathering restaurant menus for 50 years, and this

excellent reference book reflects his depth of knowledge and passion for food!

Hippocrene Books, Inc. published the *International Dictionary of Gastronomy* as well as many other wonderful titles. Their current cookbook section offers some amazing selections, from arcane and esoteric – *The Art of Uzbek Cooking*, *A Taste of Syria*, *Icelandic Food and Cookery* and the *Old Havana Cookbook* – to more mainstream subjects: *All Along the Rhine*, *Cooking in the French Fashion* and *A Taste of Quebec*. Want to know about food from Afghanistan, Burma or the Caucasus? Hippocrene has it!

For a fabulous tour of those parts of the food world that you may never visit, or perhaps never knew they existed, visit Hippocrene at their web site: [www.hippocrenebooks.com](http://www.hippocrenebooks.com).

*On today's menu:*

- [Tomato Soup \(Tamatar Shorbha\)](#)
- [Chili Prawn Salad \(Jheenga Achaari Salaat\)](#)
- [Green Beans with Coconut \(Beans Poriyal\)](#)

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## Tomato Soup (Tamatar Shorbha)

From Meena Pathak's *Flavours of India*, this northern Indian version of a classic favourite is deliciously aromatic and will warm up the coldest winter day. Meena Pathak said, "Sometimes if I really feel like cheating I buy a large can of tomato soup, water it down a little and then add all my own spices and a few chopped fresh tomatoes!"



*Serves 6-8*

- 2 lbs. tomatoes, chopped

- 1¾ pints tomato juice
- 5 tsp minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 8–10 cardamom pods
- 1 tsp ground paprika
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 1¾ pints water
- 3 oz flour
- 3 oz butter
- ¾ oz sugar
- Salt to taste
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp ajowan seeds (available in Oriental & Indian markets)
- 2 cloves garlic chopped
- Light cream to garnish
- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh cilantro

Place the chopped tomatoes, tomato juice, ginger, garlic, cardamom pods, paprika, turmeric and water in a large pan and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for about 1 hour. In a bowl mix the flour with the butter and add to the tomato mixture. Stir well and cook, stirring, for another 2 minutes. Strain the mixture into another pan and heat. Add the sugar and salt.

In another pan heat the oil, add the ajowan seeds and chopped garlic and cook, stirring, until the garlic turns golden brown. Stir into the soup and serve immediately, garnished with cream and chopped cilantro.

### *Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...*

I'm not a great advocate of wine with soup – why introduce a cold or room temperature liquid into your mouth when the soup is hot (and in this case hot in both senses of the word)? But if you'd like to serve a wine with this soup, I would choose a dry Oloroso or Palo Cortado sherry, especially if it's produced by Lustau.

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## **Chili Prawn Salad (Jheenga Achaari Salaat)**

This is a spicy salad from southeast Bengal that is served cold. If there is any left over, it is absolutely delicious on toast or you can try serving it in

vol-au-vent cases as a canapé. Pathak comments that mustard oil is often used in Indian cooking; it has a rich nutty flavour. She also likes to use the oil from a jar of mango pickle; it's wonderful for adding flavour, as all the spice flavours from the pickle will have been assorted by the oil.



*Serves 4*

- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 11 oz large raw prawns, cleaned, peeled and de-veined with tails left on
- 1 Tbsp tomato pureé
- 5 oz onions, chopped
- 5 oz green bell peppers, chopped
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 1 green chili, chopped
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 Tbsp mango pickle
- 3 Tbsp mustard oil (available in oriental/Indian markets)
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp sugar
- Chopped fresh cilantro, to garnish

Heat the vegetable oil in a large frying pan or karhai, add the prawns and stir-fry for 3–4 minutes over a medium heat.

Stir in the tomato pureé, then remove from the heat and put into a bowl large enough for the other ingredients to be mixed in later. Allow to cool for 30–45 minutes.

***Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...***

You'll need a white wine with good acidity and some residual sweetness to counter the spicing – Riesling Spätlese from the Rheingau or Pinot Gris from Alsace or a Viognier from the Rhône.

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## Green Beans with Coconut (Beans Poriyal)

This dish is from southern India and is very quick to make; it's more of a stir-fry. Meena Pathak uses fresh coconut in this recipe but says shredded is a fine substitute. Serve the bean dish with a fish curry and plain boiled rice.



*Serves 4*

- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- 2 dried red chilies
- 8–10 curry leaves
- 3 oz. onion, diced
- 1 green chili, chopped
- 14 oz. Green beans or snow peas cut into 1-inch lengths
- Salt to taste
- 3 oz fresh coconut, grated
- Juice of ½ lemon

Heat the oil in a pan and when hot, add the mustard seeds, dried red chilies and curry leaves. When the mustard seeds begin to crackle, add the diced onion and green chili. Increase the heat and stir-fry for 2–3 minutes.

Add the green beans and salt. Cook covered over a low heat for 5–10 minutes until the beans are cooked but not overdone. Add the grated coconut and lemon juice mix well and serve hot.

### ***Accompanying wine? Tony recommends...***

Again, you'll need a white (or pink) wine with some sweetness to go up against the chilies. White Zindandel would work (well chilled), off-dry Vouvray or Alsace Gewürztraminer.

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**We wish to thank the following for permission to publish material and photographs in this column:**

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Happily tested by Helen Hatton and Ron Morris.