

»»

FOOD  
*Lover's*  
GUIDE  
TO THE WORLD

*Experience the Great Global Cuisines*

»»







# FOREWORD



I suppose I was already plotting my getaway even when I was a kid. Sprawled on the floor of my suburban California bedroom with a copy of the latest National Geographic magazine, I would disappear for hours into the photographs I saw between its glossy pages. The images that always held me captive the longest, though, weren't of exotic landscapes or archaeological digs. They were of people in distant places doing that most simple of things: eating.

There's one photo I remember particularly well. It showed a village in rural India, a woman in a turquoise sari using a stick to stoke a sparking fire, a blackened pot hanging over it. I remember closely inspecting the mysterious ochre-coloured curry inside the pot, the meal she was preparing, enchanted. This place seemed so foreign but I so wanted to be there, smelling that fire, hearing it crackle, eating what I thought must be the most unimaginably delicious, exotic food. The photo was a doorway into another world, a world far removed from the pot roast and frozen dinners that I grew up eating.

At 19, I had my first real opportunity to travel to a place like the ones I'd fantasized about since I was a kid. I was in college; it was 1982. One afternoon, Tanya, a fellow student who came from Indonesia, asked rather matter of factly, 'Why don't you visit my family in Jakarta sometime?' Within days, I booked a ticket. Within weeks, I was staying in Tanya's family's home.

Then, as now, Jakarta was about as overwhelming as a place can be for a newcomer: crowded, hot, a cacophony of smells and sounds, none of them familiar or particularly friendly. My first few weeks were spent in a kind of sweaty stupor. One day, though, Tanya's mother, Ann, held a selamatan, a traditional Javanese

feast, as a benefit for a charity organization she was involved in. 'It's our version of a potluck,' Tanya told me. A parade of women soon arrived in silk sarongs with foods they'd prepared for the occasion. I counted 32 dishes in all. My jaw dropped. There were glistening coconut milk curries, pickled vegetables tinted yellow with fresh turmeric, whole grilled fish topped with lemon basil, sticky-rice sweets in every color of the rainbow—and that's just what I saw on the first table. A woman in orange batik spotted me.

'Tell me, do you know any of these foods?' she asked.

Over the course of the next few minutes she took it upon herself to act as guide, steering me toward different dishes—a beef rendang, meltingly tender and scattered with finely shredded lime leaves, from West Sumatra; Javanese opor ayam, a chicken curry fragrant with cinnamon and coriander—filling in my mental map of Indonesia with distinct flavors and aromas. Of a dish from the Spice Islands, of tuna braised with tomatoes and whole spices, she said, 'The locals use cloves and nutmeg in everything.' I began to tease out the layers of spice, chilli, lime leaf, and lemongrass in the dishes I was eating, and to grasp how a few simple, fresh foods like pineapple, cucumber, palm sugar, and peanuts can come together to make something that awakens your palate. I'd found a way to understand—and to love—Indonesia.

In the years since that trip I've traveled more places than I can count in hopes of seeking out similarly revelatory meals. I've eaten rustic char kuey teow (wok-fried noodles with cockles and shrimp) at night markets in Malaysia. I've sampled thick, chewy huaraches (foot-long, handmade tortillas) covered with searing hot árbol chilli salsa and a tangle of sautéed cactus at street stalls











# FOOD & TRAVEL

**Why travel is the best way to appreciate food, how food reflects local culture, people, landscape and so on and so forth. New York Times columnist Mark Bittman**

While cultures elsewhere had to trade to get hold of spices, here in the Subcontinent, nature provided the spice rack free of charge: cardamoms and cinnamon grow wild in the foothills of the Himalaya, while pepper vines, ginger and turmeric are common as weeds in the plains.

Subcontinental cuisine was also elevated by the clash of cultures – and the clatter of cook pots – that took place along its borders. In the west, invading armies from Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia introduced roast meat, fragrant casseroles and sweetmeats alongside the Quran and the onion dome. In the west, invaders from Burma brought seafood stews and hot and sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys. The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering. In cultures elsewhere had to trade to get hold of spices, here in the Subcontinent, nature provided the spice rack free of charge: cardamoms and cinnamon grow wild in the foothills of the Himalaya, while pepper vines, ginger and turmeric are common as weeds in the plains.

Subcontinental cuisine was also elevated by the clash of cultures – and the clatter of cook pots – that took place along its borders. In the west, invading armies from Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia introduced roast meat, fragrant casseroles and

sweetmeats alongside the Quran and the onion dome. In the west, invaders from Burma brought seafood stews and hot and sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys. The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering stews perfumed with aromatic spices. Everything that can be harvested makes it into the cooking pot – plantains, mangoes, sugar cane, okra. Meat-lovers weave magic with lamb, pork, chicken and beef, while vegans and vegetarians cook searing sauces so full of flavour you don't even notice the absence of meat. Could this be the world's greatest cuisine? You decide... In cultures elsewhere had to trade to get hold of spices, here in the Subcontinent, nature provided the spice rack free of charge: cardamoms and cinnamon grow wild in the foothills of the Himalaya, while pepper vines, ginger and turmeric are common as weeds in the plains.

Subcontinental cuisine was also elevated by the clash of cultures – and the clatter of cook pots – that took place along its borders. In the west, invading armies from Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia introduced roast meat, fragrant casseroles and sweetmeats alongside the Quran and the onion dome. In the west, invaders from Burma brought seafood stews and hot and



sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys. The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering stews perfumed with aromatic spices. Everything that can be harvested makes it into the cooking pot – plantains, mangoes, sugar cane, okra. Meat-lovers weave magic with lamb, pork, chicken and beef, while vegans and vegetarians cook searing sauces so full of flavour you don't even notice the absence of meat. Could this be the world's greatest cuisine? You decide...

le cultures elsewhere had to trade to get hold of spices, here in the Subcontinent, nature provided the spice rack free of charge: cardamoms and cinnamon grow wild in the foothills

of the Himalaya, while pepper vines, ginger and turmeric are common as weeds in the plains.

Subcontinental cuisine was also elevated by the clash of cultures – and the clatter of cook pots – that took place along its borders. In the west, invading armies from Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia introduced roast meat, fragrant casseroles and sweetmeats alongside the Quran and the onion dome. In the west, invaders from Burma brought seafood stews and hot and sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys. The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering stews perfumed with aromatic spices. Everything that can be harvested makes





it into the cooking pot – plantains, mangoes, sugar cane, okra. Meat-lovers weave magic with lamb, pork, chicken and beef, while vegans and vegetarians cook searing sauces so full of flavour you don't even notice the absence of meat. Could this be the world's greatest cuisine? You decide...

le cultures elsewhere had to trade to get hold of spices, here in the Subcontinent, nature provided the spice rack free of charge: cardamoms and cinnamon grow wild in the foothills of the Himalaya, while pepper vines, ginger and turmeric are common as weeds in the plains.

Subcontinental cuisine was also elevated by the clash of cultures – and the clatter of cook pots – that took place along its borders. In the west, invading armies from Turkey, Afghanistan and Persia introduced roast meat, fragrant casseroles and sweetmeats alongside the Quran and the onion dome. In the west, invaders from Burma brought seafood stews and hot and sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys.

The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering stews perfumed with aromatic spices. Everything sour soups from Southeast Asia. Traders, warlords and refugees from China and Tibet trekked in dumplings, stir-frying and noodles over the ridge of the Himalaya.

Over the centuries, every corner of the Subcontinent pulled a different combination of spices, ingredients and cooking styles from the culinary melting pot. In Sri Lanka, the bounty of the sea is harvested for intense seafood curries and pounded chutneys. The freshwater fish of Bangladesh are simmered in rich sauces scented with poppy seeds and mustard. And the lavish seasonings of the Indian plains collide with the rugged mountain cuisine of the Himalaya in Nepal.

Travel in South Asia is a voyage through flavours and aromas. In bustling bazaars, follow your nose to sizzling skewers, popping puri (fried bread puffs) and simmering stews perfumed with aromatic spices. Everything



