



Dining alfresco



Hariyali shrimp



A dinner spread



Mango lassi



Gajjar ka halwa (carrot fudge) with kulfi (homemade Indian ice cream with cardamom and saffron threads)

## A TASTE OF THE EAST

A Kendall resident brings the flavors of India to Miami

BY CLARISSA BUCH

spicy, prepared with clarified butter (ghee) and oils, along with other unhealthy additives, she explains. However, these often-inaccurate beliefs overlook the wide variety of dishes available, including the many healthy options in Indian cuisine.

It's been about 15 years since D'Mello, who resides in Kendall, launched Ayesha's Kitchen, an Indian cooking class series and private dinner party service. Beyond sharing tips, tricks and healthy recipes, D'Mello provides an inside look into the legacy and importance of traditional Indian food. It's her way of offering a one-way ticket to India without leaving the kitchen.

"Over the years, I have discovered that I truly have a passion to teach people how to cook," she says. "In my classes, the first couple of hours is all about cooking, but the last hour is a fine-dining, sit-down meal [hosted in D'Mello's backyard], which I think sets what I'm doing apart from other cooking classes out there."

Since she launched her cooking classes in 2005, D'Mello has created nearly 30 menus, each with six dishes, including appetizers, main plates, side and desserts. Every class she teaches reflects her philosophy of cooking quick, easy, delicious and healthy Indian meals that anyone can learn and cook in their own kitchen with locally available spices. She transforms difficult and complicated dishes into ones that even basic cooks can nail.

A typical class includes an "Indian Spices 101" discussion, which touches on the healthful benefits of certain spices, followed by a step-by-step course in preparing five to six Indian dishes using organic ingredients, herbs and spices.

She then offers tips and techniques for everyday Indian cooking, while enjoying a family-style meal served alfresco. There's an online course available, too, which follows D'Mello cooking up various Indian recipes inside her own kitchen.

"What I specialize in is homestyle Indian cuisine," D'Mello says. "When you run a restaurant, you're concerned with pleasing customers and making money. For me, I'm focused on educating my students on the mind and body benefits of traditional Indian cuisine. It's about offering a window into the many lesser-known dishes that make this kind of food so fascinating."



Ayesha D'Mello

Ayesha D'Mello has dined across continents, so when she says Indian cuisine in Miami isn't where it needs to be, she's speaking from years of travel and experience.

Born and raised in India, D'Mello has lived in Canada and throughout the United States, spending her early career in software and technology in Silicon Valley. But after moving to Miami with her husband, D'Mello decided to change

her life, trading computers for cooking in an effort to educate her new city on the beauty of Indian cuisine.

"After we had just moved to Miami, when our kids were still little, I would pack them little Indian snacks to take to school," D'Mello remembers. "They would come home and tell me they dumped them all into the garbage. They wanted grilled cheese or peanut butter and jelly instead. That's when I realized there was a severe gap in Miami when it came to the flavors of Indian cuisine."

There is a stereotype that all Indian food is hot and

### AYESHA'S KITCHEN

**Social:** @ayeshaskitchen1 on Facebook;

@ayeshas\_kitchen on Instagram;

@ayeshaskitchen on Twitter

**Web:** ayeshaskitchen.com