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YOU'RE INVITED

[Bollywood Dinner Party](#)

In honor of Raghavan Iyer's new Indian cookbook.

by [Jeremy Iggers](#)



WANT TO HAVE A BOLLYWOOD PARTY?

Local Indian grocery stores provide one-stop shopping for a good selection of Bollywood movies and Indian food.

- Patel Groceries is a treasure trove for Indian food, clothing and accessories. It has a small restaurant with meals and snacks for carryout. 1835 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis, 612.789.8800.
- Asia Imports is Patel's main competitor. It also has a restaurant as well as videos and groceries. 1840 Central Ave. NE, Minneapolis, 612.788.4571.
- South Asian Foods has Indian videos, groceries and prepared foods, 765 53rd Ave. NE (just off of Central), Fridley, 763.586.9800.
- Curry Up Foods is another top spot for Indian videos, groceries and prepared foods. 13601 Grove Dr., Maple Grove, 763.416.2117.

What kind of food goes with larger-than-life dramas of heroes and villains, love and betrayal, punctuated by over-the-top eruptions of spectacularly choreographed song and dance? Indian cuisine, of course — spicy and lively and full of passion and flavor. Combine Bollywood movies and Indian cuisine, and you have the perfect recipe for an exotic but easy summer dinner party.

BOLLYWOOD BREAKTHROUGH

Thanks to globalization, the newest big-budget blockbusters from Bombay (now called Mumbai) are as close as your neighborhood Blockbusters, or your mailbox — Netflix offers a big selection. Weekend screenings at the Brookdale and Maple Grove cineplexes draw enthusiastic crowds from the local Indian community — estimated at 35,000 — and growing numbers of non-Indians as well. Indian cuisine is hot, too — and in more ways than one. Indian restaurants and markets are opening all over the Twin Cities metro, and local cooking teacher and cookbook author Raghavan Iyer is a rising star on the national food scene. His last cookbook, *The Turmeric Trail: Recipes and Memories from an Indian Childhood* was a James Beard Cookbook Award finalist, and Iyer is spending much of this summer on a 32-city tour to promote his latest book, *660 Curries*.

COOKBOOK CELEBRATION

In honor of the book's publication, Ranjan and Rita Dumra of New Brighton recently hosted a dinner party that featured recipes from Iyer's latest cookbook. Ranjan, a financial adviser, is the man who first brought Indian films to local Cineplex theaters, and the Dumras often host Bollywood movie nights on their big-screen home

theater. Some guests arrived in the traditional Indian kurta pajama duo for men, salwar kameez for women, while others came in casual western wear. The word curry is not spoken in any of India's languages, Raghavan told the guests, but there are a number of dishes that have similar-sounding names, and what they all have in common is savory sauces. "For us, curries are all about sauces. When you think about curry, think about the four "S"es — they are saucy, they are spicy, they are sinful, they are sensational, sort of like me."

SOUTH ASIAN DELIGHTS

The menu for the dinner party included potato pea croquettes with a tomato-jaggery sauce; poori puffs with chili water, crimini mushrooms stuffed with paneer cheese; Maharashtrian chunky potatoes with garlic and peanuts, sockeye salmon in a Kerala-style smoky-tart coconut milk sauce, and a spectacular dessert of cardamom-scented yogurt cheese with tropical fruits. The dishes were prepared by Iyer himself, with help from Rita. "Rita's a very good cook herself," said guest Ram Rao of Shoreview. "This house is basically a party house."

If there is a single Indian dish that captures the drama and excitement of a Bollywood movie, it's the mouth-sized poori puffs. It's a do-it-yourself taste experience: first you puncture the puffs with your thumb, spoon in some spiced chickpeas, pour a little tamarind sauce on top, and fill the cavity with a refreshing chili-spiked water. Then you quickly take the whole snack in your mouth at once, bite down, and it explodes with flavor. Indian cooking can be labor-intensive, but it doesn't have to be. Iyer's step-by-step recipes are easy to follow, but if you are pressed for time, consider ordering take-out. Most local Indian restaurants offer a good selection of standard Indian appetizers and main dishes, but for something more unusual, try one of the Indian markets that offers Indian snacks and street fare.

Welcome to the party:











Photography by Elias Adams.

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