

# DECCAN CHRONICLE

**PRASANNA PANDARINATHAN**  
The priceless recipe given is a labour of love, with Prasnanna having collated the treasured making of lipsmacking fish curries, prawn masala, shrimp pickle, curry leaf chutney... and even a tasty rendition of the sundial she used to have at Marina Beach during her early years.

## LABOUR OF LOVE

Anmi, a cookbook memoir by debutant author, Prasnanna Pandarinathan, draws in the fragrance of childhood experiences created lovingly by her mother



### JACKFRUIT PAYASAM

Jackfruit payasam takes us back to the two jackfruit trees planted by mom in our Bangalore home. The large tropical tree with a strong distinct smell can be appreciated from quite a distance. Rich in energy, dietary fibre, minerals and vitamins and free from saturated fats or cholesterol, it makes a healthy summer treat. As jackfruit tree owners we can tell you this fruit requires skill to cut and palate to appreciate. Soft and sweet jackfruit pieces in milk, garnished with a sprinkling of almonds, melon seeds and a light drizzle of rose water constitutes the jackfruit payasam.

#### INGREDIENTS METHOD

**1 big jackfruit**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**1 cup brown sugar**  
**1 cup almonds**  
**1 cup melon seeds**  
**1½ tsp rose water**  
**½ tsp cardamom powder**  
**8 cups milk**, a pinch of salt

Clean and cut the jackfruit into small pieces. Chop the almonds finely or into strips.  
Boil the milk on low heat till it becomes thicker.  
Then add sugar and stir for about 1.5 minutes.  
Add the jackfruit pieces into the milk and cook on low flame for 30 minutes. When the jackfruit becomes soft, remove it from the stove.  
Garnish it with chopped almonds, melon seeds, cardamom powder and rose water.

### PAMBAN FISH CURRY

The Pamban fish market, in Rameswaram, Mother's ancestral home, was her first stop when she arrived there. This huge coastal market with freshest catches is a sight to behold and a smell to get used to. Although I would hold my nose as I watched her bargain for the best price of fish, the anticipation of her appetising Pamban fish curry would keep me going.

**Prep time 20 min, cooking time 20 min, serves 6-8**

**INGREDIENTS**  
**1 kg seer fish** (or Indian butter fish or mackerel)  
**500 gm** (small) onions  
**2 medium tomatoes**  
**2 tsp red chili powder**  
**3 tsp coriander powder**  
**1 tsp turmeric powder**  
**1 tsp cumin seeds**  
**3 tsp poppy seeds**

**1. 1 tsp black mustard seeds**  
**1. 1 tsp fenugreek seeds**  
**1. 1 tsp peppercorns**  
**2. 1 tsp ginger piece**  
**4-5 peeled garlic cloves**  
**1-inch cinnamon stick**  
**4 cloves**  
**4 green cardamoms**  
**4 or 5 green chilies**  
**1. 1 grated coconut**  
**lime-sized tamarind**  
**2½ tsp oil**  
**Wash and rub the salt, turmeric and lime juice on the whole fish, cut into medium-sized pieces and keep aside.**



**SHILPI MADAN**  
The fragrance of fresh spices being ground in our kitchen each morning served as our alarm clock. I surfaced each morning to the slow, rhythmic sound of the grinding stone or anmi as it is called in Tamil, that Mom used for everyday cooking. She used the anmi as opposed to the mixer since the slow grinding of chutneys and the masalas on the stone brought out the flavours, oils and spices, combining them and giving them a beautiful soft texture simply not attainable by a machine. Nowadays, when I wake up I sometimes lie in bed listening to the silence – a void that was left by her passing away. The anmi mixes her too...

**I** is a 300-page book, a food atlas. Anmi: an expression of love... from the kitchen of her mother - Nirmala Pandarinathan, that Bengaluru-based photographer and former model. Prasnanna Pandarinathan has put together lovingly, chronicling the warm growth of her mother's culinary skills over the years. "This is my mother's story. Food holds a history for everyone, for my mom it began in the melting pot of culture and cuisines - Colonial Singapore," says Prasnanna. "She was raised here in a mix of Indian, Malaysian, Chinese, Indonesian and European cultures. Married she found her self in London," she shares, reminiscing about the crib she shared with a kiki on the shores of Rameswaram when they visited India.



The priceless recipe given is a labour of love, with Prasnanna having collated the treasured making of lipsmacking arry, ranging from fish curry, prawn masala, shrimp pickle, curry leaf chutney, and Chestnut carries to egg sambal, mutton dala and banana blossom vada, and even a tasty rendition of the sundial she used to have at Marina Beach during her early years. It is a rich profusion of ingredients, local, fresh and seasonal - bringing out mouth-watering specials in baked crabs and biryani - celebrating the mouthful of pleasure with darling ingredients in nutmeg, banana blossoms and muskmelon inclusions. The flavours leap out of the pages, toasting your nostrils and palate with flirtation and flourish.

"I grew up watching her cook and being so passionate, with making food delicious. She enjoyed having people over, cooking for them... our home was always an open house. I learned a lot once she passed away. I too went through the process of going to the market early morning, getting the freshest produce, coming back and cooking. It has been a healing process for me," says Prasnanna. "Yet the one dish that I could not get myself to making is the brain omelette she made with red fish. I'm not brave enough to cook it for now." Her own love for cooking stands shaped by the delicious waits from the kitchen, the cheerfulness and love that her mother poured into the recipes as she served the food to everyone.

Any eclectic detours that Prasnanna has made herself? "Usually I cook locally grown produce, but I just brought in last obscure thing would be toddy while making appams," she confesses. Turmeric, saffron and cinnamon rank high on her list of favourite ingredients at the moment. "I believe in American restaurateur Guy Fieri's words - 'Cooking is all about people. Food is maybe the only universal thing that really has the power to bring everyone together. No matter what culture, everywhere around the world, people eat together,'" she says. All recipes below are taken from the author's cookbook Anmi.

### STEAMED LENTIL BALLS IN TAMARIND GRAVY

**T**his is a quintessential South Indian dish bursting with spice and tanginess and is one of my favourites.

**Prep time 10 min, cooking time 45 min, serves 4-6**

**Ingredients:**  
**2 tsp oil**  
**¼ kg Bengal Gram**

**1/2 tsp turmeric powder**  
**1 tsp chili powder**  
**2 cups water**  
**5 green chilies**  
**1/2 cup grated coconut**  
**1/2 cup green chilies**  
**1/2 tsp coriander powder**  
**1 tomato** a few coriander leaves  
**a few curry leaves**  
**salt to taste**

**METHOD**  
Soak Bengal gram in water for 30 minutes. Drain the water and then grind to a paste without adding water.  
Add salt and mix well then roll into small lemon-sized balls and steam them in a steamer (if steamer will do).  
Grind the grated coconut flakes to a smooth paste.  
Fry the onions, curry leaves, 4 slit green chilies, 1 finely chopped tomato, cardamoms, cloves, turmeric and coriander powder.  
Add water and coconut paste/roll for about 10 minutes and then simmer till the gravy is semi-thick. Add the steam balls and boil for another 10 minutes.  
Garnish with coriander leaves.



### PEPPER MASALA MUTTON CHOPS

I can't remember a single time when mutton chops in pepper masala came out tasting less than perfect. Dad and my nephew Anish are testimony to that since we wouldn't bear a peep from them until every last morsel on their plates was devoured.

**Prep time 10 min, cooking time 40 min, serves 6-8**

**INGREDIENTS**  
**1 kg mutton chops**  
**4 tomatoes**  
**2 onions**  
**1 cup oil**  
**1 cup coconut milk**  
**½ tsp turmeric powder**  
**2 tsp black pepper powder**  
**2 tsp chili powder**  
**1 tsp coriander powder**  
**1 tsp ginger-garlic paste**  
**1 tsp ginger-garlic paste**  
**a few curry leaves**  
**a few curry leaves**  
**Salt to taste**

Wash and rub a little pepper, chili, turmeric, ginger-garlic paste and a little salt into the mutton and set aside for 30 minutes. Pressure cook the mutton to 3 whistles with 1 cup of water. Finely chop the onions and tomatoes. Heat the oil and fry the onions, saute for a few minutes and then add the remaining ginger-garlic paste.  
Saute and add the chopped tomatoes, chili powder, coriander powder and ground masala. Cook for 5 minutes, add the coconut milk and the chaps.  
Cook till tender and when the masala is dry add pepper and the curry leaves.  
Serve with rice or idiyappam.

### TANJORE CHICKEN PEPPER FRY

Wash and cut the chicken into small pieces.  
Finely chop the onions.  
Dry grind the pepper-coriander.  
Break the cinnamon and the dry red chillies into medium pieces.  
Pour the oil in a deep frying pan or kadai and fry the cinnamon, cloves, cardamoms, curry leaves, peeled garlic and onions till golden brown; add the ginger-garlic paste, broken red chillies, salt and turmeric. Add the chicken and fry for 5-7 minutes and then add half a cup of water; cover and cook on low flame. Keep stirring until it is drier and cooked.  
Add the pepper powder and fry for 5 minutes, remove from the stove.  
Serve with rotis or rice.  
Note: you can use the same method for mutton pepper fry.  
You may also add 2 cups of coconut milk after adding the chicken/mutton for a different flavor.

**INGREDIENTS**  
**1 kg chicken**  
**3 tsp ginger-garlic paste**  
**100 gm poppercorn**  
**1/4 cup oil**  
**1/4 tsp turmeric powder**  
**10 dry red chillies**  
**2 onions**  
**1 pod peeled garlic**  
**5 cardamoms**  
**5 cloves**  
**1 inch cinnamon stick**  
**a few curry leaves**  
**Salt to taste**

