

## Six Spices: A Simple Concept of Indian Cooking

**Neeta Saluja**

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*Easy to follow and impressively authentic, Six Spices has distilled a challenging cuisine into something accessible to everyone.*

Making Indian food can be confusing for home cooks who are not used to the techniques and spices unique to this tradition. As the demand for once-exotic cuisines and flavors increases, so too should the availability of reliable recipes and explanations. Welcome *Six Spices*! With a clean and organized layout, beautiful bright photography, and sound advice born out of many years of teaching, Neeta Saluja has filled a gap in cookbook literature.

*Six Spices* is as beautiful as any cookbook on the shelves today but it is so much more than a pretty cover and sturdy sewn binding. While you could use this book as an occasional reference for a recipe here and there, its value lies in how much information Saluja has managed to pack between more than sixty recipes. Saluja begins with a thoughtful introduction describing her relationship with Indian food, the impetus for writing this book, and a brief overview of how she has organized her chapters. Her tone is informal but authoritative. Before a single recipe is introduced, each of the six basic spices is described with its English name and Indian name ("Mustard Seed (raai)"), origin, appearance, flavor profile, and interesting homeopathic uses.

Seasoned hot oil and seasoned hot clarified butter (ghee) is then explored through the next two chapters. Instead of the recipe dictating when to add ingredients, Saluja takes the time to describe what is happening at each step, empowering readers with the knowledge that certain ingredients need more time to develop flavor than others and that ingredients added to hot oil too early may scorch.

"Cooking with Powdered Spices" and "Cooking with Curry Paste" follow, with descriptive method-based introductions to each chapter. The recipes are preceded by a comment about the spice's origin, its texture, or a serving suggestion, giving the cook a context for each dish.

There are recipes to suit vegetarians and omnivores alike, along with suggestions for substitutions and encouraging ideas for adding individual creativity, making *Six Spices* versatile and inclusive. With an intuitive table of contents and a recipe list at the beginning of each chapter, as well as a full index, a glossary, and sample menus, Saluja's book makes this a very user-friendly culinary journey.

SARA BUDZIK (Spring 2014)

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