

## A taste of Nepal

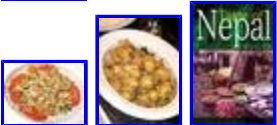
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By DERRICK EK | THE LEADER

Jyoti Pathak displays a few dishes from her cookbook, "A Taste of Nepal," in the kitchen of her Painted Post home. Pathak's cookbook recently won a national award.

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By Derrick Ek  
Corning Leader

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Painted Post, N.Y. -

After Jyoti Pathak – born and raised in Kathmandu, Nepal – first came to the U.S. nearly 40 years ago, she looked everywhere for a cookbook on Nepali cuisine.

She wanted to expand the repertoire of native dishes she could cook for herself and her husband, and later, their family.

Pathak – who resides in Painted Post – said she looked in bookstores and libraries, and even checked with the Nepal embassy in Washington, D.C., but didn't find anything. That's when she first realized there was a niche to fill.

Decades later, in June 2007, Pathak's cookbook, "A Taste of Nepal," was published by New York City-based Hippocrene Books.

And recently, the cookbook earned the title of best foreign cuisine book in the U.S. in the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, an international competition.

Pathak will fly to a banquet in London, England in early April to receive her award. Her book is also in the running, against books from other countries honored in the same category, for the title of best foreign cuisine book in the world.

She'll find out if she won at the April event.

There were more than 6,000 books in 40 languages from 65 countries entered in this year's competition, according to officials at the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. The entries were drawn from an estimated 24,000 cookbooks published each year around the world.

Recipes, by themselves, make for a somewhat dry read; it's possible that Pathak was recognized because she weaves a bit of Nepal's history and culture into her cookbook, focusing on the customs that relate to cooking and eating.

In her preface, for example, she writes how Nepal was isolated for centuries, giving rise to a very distinctive cuisine. Sixty years ago, its borders were opened, and Indian, Tibetan, Chinese and Western influences seeped into Nepali cooking.

Geographically, Nepal is diverse, from the tropical lowlands of Tarai to the arctic Himalayan peaks, and its food varies accordingly.

However, generally speaking, the food is "characterized by its simplicity, lightness and healthfulness," Pathak writes. "A typical meal uses only the freshest local ingredients, minimal fat, and an artful combination of herbs and spices."

There are about 350 recipes in the book, ranging from simple rice dishes to more exotic concoctions such as Dahi Haaleko Boka-Khasi ko Maasu (yogurt-marinated goat curry) and Raango ko Maasu (water buffalo with ginger and garlic).

Each section of the book – such as Daal (dried beans, lentils and peas), Tarkaari (vegetables) or Momos (dumplings) is introduced with a short essay on the role of the dishes in Nepali cuisine.

During the lengthy research and writing process for "A Taste of Nepal," Pathak consulted with lots of family and friends, here in the U.S. and back in her native Nepal.

There aren't many Nepali cookbooks, apparently, because cooking is largely an oral tradition passed down through the generations.

Many recipes in Nepal, she explained, are cooked with "a dash of this" or a "pinch of that." So she spent many hours in the kitchen, translating pinches and dashes into teaspoons and tablespoons and otherwise testing

the recipes.

Pathak says she made an effort to use spices readily available in the U.S., or at least available in places such as the ethnic food section of Wegmans.

She imagines the book appeals to Nepalese living abroad, looking for a taste of home cooking; to those who have spent time in Nepal and wish to make the dishes they enjoyed there; as well as to those who just like to experiment with the food of distant cultures.

"A Taste of Nepal" is available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other retailers, as well as through Pathak's Web site, [www.tasteofnepalcookbook.com](http://www.tasteofnepalcookbook.com).

Pathak and her husband, Dr. Kamal Pathak – an ear, nose and throat specialist – have lived in the area since 1975. They have three grown children, Rachana, Sapana and Parag.

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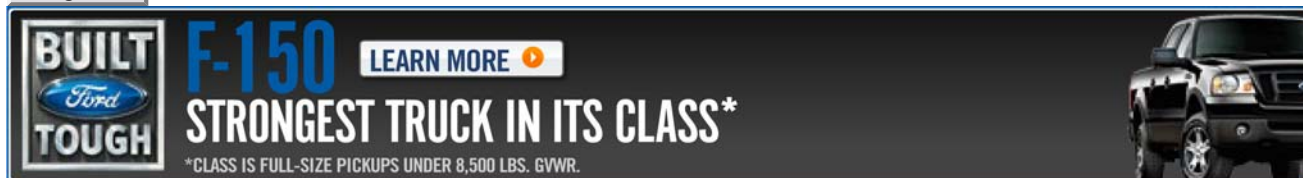
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