



Potato-Stuffed Parathas  
with Cachoombhar.



#### EXCERPT

A new cookbook by **Jeffrey Alford** and **Naomi Duguid** is always a treat. Together they have won the prestigious James Beard Cookbook of the Year Award (for *Flatbreads and Flavors* and *Hot Sour Salty Sweet*) and the Cuisine Canada Cookbook Award (for *Seductions of Rice* and *HomeBaking*). The stunning *Mangoes & Curry Leaves* is a roadmap, for cooks and armchair travellers alike, to one of the world's richest and most diverse culinary regions.

# Mangoes & Curry Leaves

Culinary Travels Through the Great Subcontinent





There's a shared sensibility in the Subcontinent when it comes to matters of eating. People almost always eat using one hand (the right hand), and they very seldom use utensils. This may not sound like a big deal, but we think it is. Time after time we watch foreigners come to the Subcontinent and have a very difficult time at first, eating without utensils and using only one hand. But interestingly, almost everyone breaks through, and when they do, they are entirely converted. Eating by hand influences how food tastes and how we relate to it. It's so sensual, so direct. But when we go back home, no matter how hard we try to resist, out come the utensils. Eating is a very culture-bound tradition.

One of the great pleasures of eating in the Subcontinent is that styles of eating by hand differ from place to place. When northerners eat rice, they pick it up with the tips of their fingers and then use their thumb to push the small amount of rice into their mouth. In southern regions, people eat rice using the entire hand, forming a ball of rice (approximately the size of a golf ball) by gathering the rice into their palm, flicking the wrist sideways to shape it into a mass, and finally tossing the entire ball into their mouth.

As a foreigner, it's fun to watch and learn, to try to imitate (though a style doesn't come quickly). After a while, when you think you've got it down, the style itself feels somehow crucial to the food, as if that particular food has to be eaten in that particular way. And if you eat by hand, when you're finished with your meal, you still have tasty little bits on your fingers, and then later, even after you've washed your hands, there's a delicious aroma that lingers. As foreigners we find all this wonderfully addictive, and so we can only imagine how important it would feel if we'd been eating this same food in this same way all our lives, and how unsatisfying it would feel to eat with utensils.



Dominic and Tahiti Alford-Duguid



**From far left:**  
Piles of curry leaves, mint leaves, and other fresh herbs at a Sri Lankan market.

**Corn, native to the Americas, has become a useful staple in many places in the Subcontinent. In this photo, cobs of corn are being grilled in a rural market in the state of Orissa.**

**Woman transplanting rice in Bangladesh, north of the town of Rajshahi.**



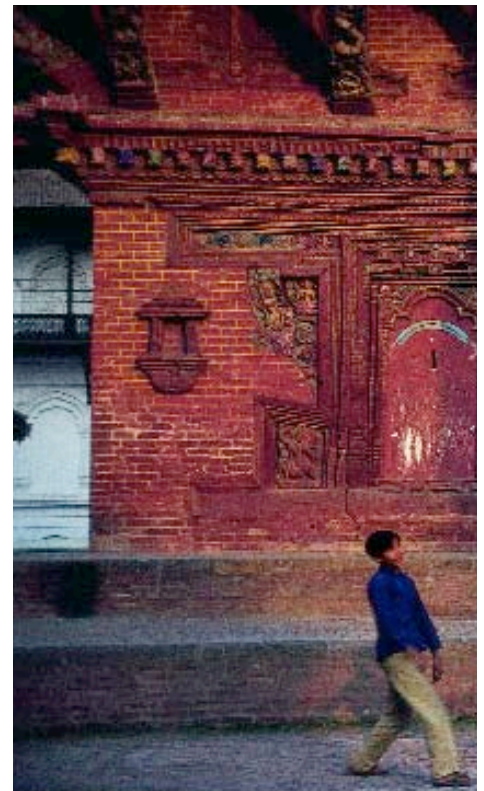


Harvested rice, still in the husk, needs to be dried in the sun (or by machinery) before it can be milled. Here in Bangladesh the traditional method is still in use: The rice is spread on a flat surface, and then the women walk through it to turn the grains, exposing them to the heat of the sun.



Right: Kathmandu is a living museum, Hindu and Buddhist, but a museum in desperate decay. The street kids speak well in English, Japanese, German, and French, but there's little chance they will go to school. To see an Indian movie at the cinema, they split the cost of a ticket, a nickel, and then share a seat.

Far right: A load of sweet bananas, still on the stalk, being unloaded from a truck at the huge wholesale market in Chennai (Madras), capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, in southern India.





## SWEET YOGURT SUNDAE WITH SAFFRON AND PISTACHIOS

Yogurt makes a simple and attractive sweet course or cooling snack-treat. This version of sweetened yogurt from Bengal is called *mishti doi*, *doi* being Bengali for “yogurt.” The yogurt drains for an hour to lose its bitter whey and to thicken a little, then it is blended with jaggery (palm or crude sugar) and flavorings. Use good whole-milk yogurt, preferably organic. Serve in small bowls or tall sundae glasses and top with pistachios, or with pomegranate seeds or chopped toasted almonds.

- 1 quart plain full-fat yogurt**
- Generous 1/4 teaspoon saffron strands (optional)**
- 1/3 cup whole milk**
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom**  
or freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/3 cup finely chopped jaggery (palm or crude sugar), or more to taste, or substitute honey or brown sugar**
- About 1/4 cup coarsely chopped pistachios, pomegranate seeds, or chopped toasted almonds**

Line a large sieve or colander with cheesecloth or coarse cotton.

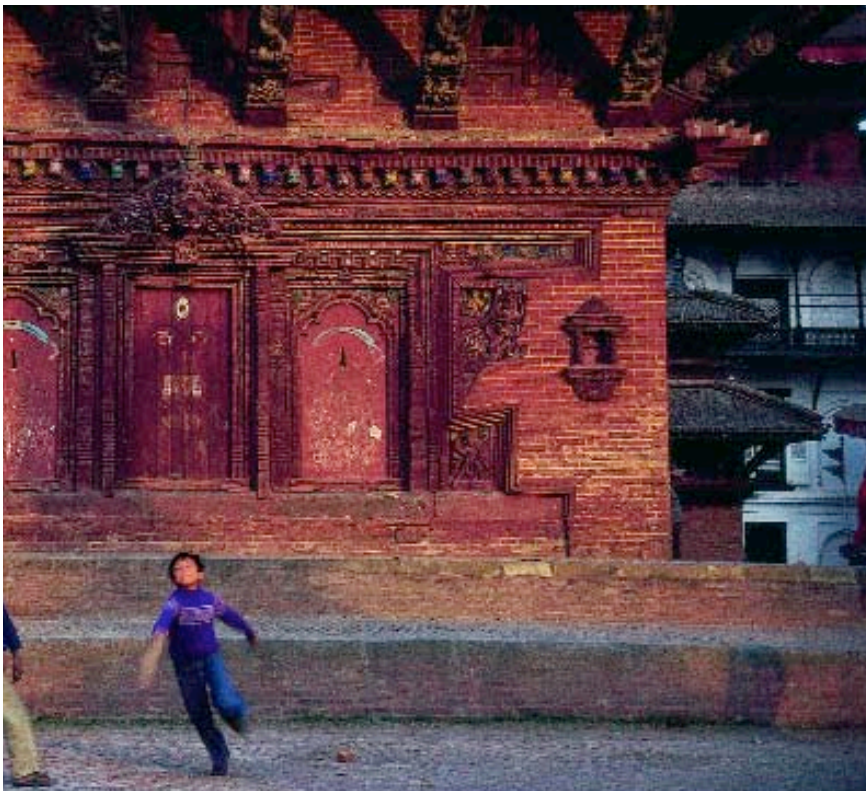
Wet the cloth with water, then place the sieve or colander over a bowl. Place the yogurt in the sieve to drain for 1 hour in the refrigerator.

Turn the yogurt into a bowl and set aside. Use the whey for another purpose (it makes a refreshing drink and can also be used in place of lemon juice to curdle milk for making *chhana* and *paneer*), or discard.

If using the saffron, lightly toast the strands in a small dry skillet over medium heat, until brittle. Add the milk and cardamom or nutmeg, or if not using saffron, heat the milk and cardamom in a small saucepan; bring to a simmer, and simmer briefly, until the cardamom releases its scent (and the optional saffron gives off its color). Remove from the heat and stir in the sugar or honey until dissolved.

Whisk the mixture into the yogurt. Use a ladle to pour the yogurt into glasses or bowls. Top with a sprinkling of nuts or pomegranate seeds, and with a little more sugar if you wish.

Serves 8 **R**



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