

*Eat globally, cook locally*

# Ethnic cooking classes

By Jennifer Fetterly

**P**akistani-born **Huma Siddiqui** will take you on a global tour around the world. No passport or luggage is required, just a fork and knife.

Since April 2003, the certified public accountant turned cooking instructor has been introducing Pakistani cuisine to Wisconsin residents. She shows off her cooking skills to eager students at **Whole Foods Market** and **Orange Tree Imports** in Madison and **All Through The House** in Stoughton.

The cuisine is resplendent with spices, a touch of **Garam Masala**, a heady combination of cloves, green and black cardamoms, cinnamon and cumin, which Siddiqui says "provide a lot of flavor, but does not overwhelm dishes with spices." The elegant cook counts **samosas**, a deep-fried pastry stuffed with spicy potatoes, as her favorite, so much so that she has been nicknamed the "Samosa Queen" by friends.

"Classes are not only about the food, it is about the culture of Pakistan," says Siddiqui, who also owns her own online business, **White Jasmine**, and is author of the cookbook, *Jasmine in Her Hair*.

With a combination of humor and storytelling, cooking school students learn about Siddiqui's Muslim traditions such as Ramadan and a little about her childhood in Pakistan and her transition into American society. Students are invited to eat and enjoy the food cooked during the two-and a half-hour classes, which cost about \$15 at Whole Foods Market.

Siddiqui says her classes have received a great response. "As people travel more, they become more curious about cuisine of other cultures," Siddiqui says.

The emphasis of her Pakistani recipes is simplicity. Chicken Korma may

require 11 different spices to make but the preparation is easy. And the results are delicious! Her repertoire also includes vegetarian options; Choley (spicy chick peas), Saag Aloo (spinach with potatoes), and **Shahi Dal**, a lentil curry.

The popularity of cooking shows on television has transferred to cooking classes being offered by restaurants and retailers.

This February, Whole Foods Market will offer Moroccan cuisine with cooking instructor **Fatna Bellouchi** and Caribbean cooking with **Sharlene Merline** who grew up in Grenada.

"Cooking classes give us a chance to highlight foods that many people have not experienced and brings new people into our store," says **Brad Bohlen**, marketing and community relations director for Whole Foods Market in Madison.

At Orange Tree Imports in Madison, the majority of cooking classes focus on international cuisine. **KT Hawk**, cooking school class coordinator, says the cooking school offers Chinese Dim Sum, traditional Nepalese cooking, as well as Mexican, Italian and Greek cuisine classes.

Hawk says people who sign up for global cuisine classes are "looking for a new culinary challenge," going above-and-beyond traditional American cooking. There are a couple reasons why Hawk says international cuisine is becoming more popular. One is the



**Huma Siddiqui (above) teaches Madison area cooks about Pakistani cuisine (right).**

trend to eat more healthy and low-fat foods. "International cuisine tends to be healthier; it is great if you are watching your health," says Hawk.

Another reason for the popularity is that "foodies" have become more aware of international food trends through magazines, television and ethnic restaurants. People searching for those trends will find something to pique their interest in the global cooking itinerary at Orange Tree Imports. The two-hour-plus classes start at \$38 or more, depending on the cost of ingredients. Class size is limited to 10 students, and students learn through demonstration, rather than participation. But Hawk says some instructors do have students help out occasionally.



## Get started on your global journey

These websites will help you find the right ethnic cooking class for you:

**Huma Siddiqui's White Jasmine** <http://www.whitejasmine.com>

**Whole Foods Market** <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com>

**Orange Tree Imports** <http://www.orangetreeimports.com>

**All Through the House** <http://www.shopthehouse.com>

**We're Cooking Now** <http://www.werecookingnow.org>

**Wisconsin Union Mini Courses** <http://www.union.wisc.edu/minicourses>



Hawk says new classes this winter and spring will offer a revival of Southwestern and Latin cuisines, as well as the always-popular Asian cuisine classes.

### Food and friends

Kim Walter, general manager of All Through The House in Stoughton, says, "Cooking classes are a great form of entertainment that you can do with your friends." The Stoughton shop offers classes to mostly women clients, and sees a lot of women groups coming to their international cuisine classes, which sell out quickly. Women also bring their husbands and boyfriends and enjoy a meal — yes, sampling is encouraged — and a bit of entertainment.

All Through The House has offered classes in Indian, Italian, Hawaiian and Greek cuisine. The cookware and gift retailer also can help you find hard-to-find cooking equipment to duplicate those cooking class recipes as

home. When an instructor showed students how to make spaetzle, (German dumplings), the store ordered spaetzle makers for enthusiastic students.

Apart from the cuisine, Walter says the store offers a variety of cooking school instructors who gain a following among students.

Join an international cooking class and let your instructor be your guide on a global cuisine tour.

*Jennifer Fetterly is a Madison-based freelance writer who loves to travel and eat—mixing the two is the ideal! Returning from her travels she likes to recreate the experience by cooking newly-discovered recipes and foods from her journeys.*

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- ☛ L'Allegra Tavolata—The Happy Table)
- ☛ Kombucha & Kefir

For class information, check out [willystreet.coop/events/events.html](http://willystreet.coop/events/events.html) or stop by the store.

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