



[Vibrant India: Fresh Vegetarian Recipes from Bangalore to Brooklyn](#)

by Chitra Agrawal, copyright © 2017. Published by Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.”

Photography credit: Erin Scott © 2017.

Our Summary:

Light, fresh and satisfying vegetarian meals – many vegan and gluten-free – await anyone curious enough to indulge in the exercise of scouting some hard to find ingredients in [Vibrant India: Fresh Vegetarian Recipes from Bangalore to Brooklyn](#). Adapting family South Indian recipes for the home kitchen, chef, [blogger](#) and owner of *Brooklyn Delhi* (an award-winning Indian condiments line) Chitra Agrawal shifts our conventional thinking of Americanized-Indian cuisine toward seasonal vegetables and fruits and unprocessed whole grains, nuts, seeds, oils, and dairy products. The

food is vibrant in color and flavor and diverse. Patience and perseverance helps you get started. Once you have, your senses will be delighted and your appetite satisfied.

What you need to know:

Get It: [Vibrant India: Fresh Vegetarian Recipes from Bangalore to Brooklyn](#) by Chitra Agrawal.

Photography credit: Erin Scott. Published by Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC March 21, 2017. Hardcover \$24.99 ([Amazon \\$16.50](#); [Kindle \\$13.99](#))

See It: 224 pages with color photos of most recipes, either the finished product or the ingredients. Plus, a variety of family photos, and cultural illustrations leading each chapter. An easy to navigate *Table of Contents* and a thorough *Index* cross referencing recipes by both name and ingredients are included. A thorough chapter identifying and explaining *The South Indian Pantry* helps to understand and locate new or hard to find ingredients.

Make it: 78 recipes spread out through 9 chapters including everything from *Breakfast and Light Meals, Salads and Yogurts, curries, rice, Soups, Stews, and Lentils, Sweets and Drinks* and pantry staples.

Our Review:

If you’ve never cooked Indian cuisine, the best way to approach [Vibrant India: Fresh Vegetarian Recipes from Bangalore to Brooklyn](#) is from a curious, eager-to-learn point of view. Even if you are a veteran of vegetarian cooking, [Vibrant India](#) will challenge your thinking and your pantry. That’s not to suggest passing this book by. You would miss out on a flavorful discovery – one that will excite all of your senses.

The most important chapters in Chitra Agrawal’s debut cookbook are *How to Use This Book*, which is one of the first pages you open to, and her references for buying ingredients and the *Starter Grocery List*, which sadly doesn’t appear until the end of the book. From these few pages, Agrawal introduces South Indian cooking into your kitchen with the absolute minimum ingredients you need to make a wide range of recipes. To your surprise, half of those ingredients you will find in your grocery store, and then to your surprise again, the other half will have to be sourced from an Indian grocery store or online.



With a bit of patience and perseverance, however, you are up and running and expanding your cultural cooking repertoire to include the chili and cinnamon spiced “Vangi Baath” Roasted Brussels Sprouts and Cauliflower, Stir-fried Corn with Basil and Leeks, Stuffed Shishito Pepper Fritters, and Karnataka Coconut Vegetable Curry – Karnataka referencing Agrawal’s family’s home state in India. Perhaps as exciting, many of these vegetarian recipes are also vegan, and gluten-free. For those eating within these parameters, if you’ve longed for intensity of taste and flavor, you will find it here.

And if you are patient, and persevere in your quest for stocking your pantry with these long-shelf-life staples, you will enjoy the diversity and range offered in *Vibrant India*. You will re-learn how to cook vegetables and stir-fries; you will learn how to cook and blend your own seasonings. Agrawal even includes refreshing drinks like *Chile Watermelon Juice with Lime and Mint Leaves*, and a *Mango and Coconut Milkshake*. And while most of the methods employed in cooking these recipes are familiar, and many quite fast, the bulk of time invested will be in tracking down ethnic ingredients, or waiting for them to arrive in the mail.

Recipes from Vibrant India:

Reprinted with permission from [Vibrant India: Fresh Vegetarian Recipes from Bangalore to Brooklyn](#) by Chitra Agrawal, copyright © 2017. Published by Ten Speed Press, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC. Photography credit: Erin Scott © 2017

[Shredded Carrot and Lentil Salad](#)

Chef Donna’s Notes: Moong dal are split mung beans without skin. Black Mustard Seeds* are more pungent than yellow and brown mustard seeds. Asafetida (hing) powder* is an extremely pungent resin derived from the sap of a plant similar to fennel. You can substitute onion powder or garlic powder, but the taste is not the same. For the fresh curry leaves* you can substitute fresh lime zest or fresh Kaffir lime leaves – again, the taste will not be the same. Do not substitute curry powder.*

[Yellow Lentil and Rice “Risotto”](#)

Chef Donna’s Notes: Moong dal are split mung beans without skin. The author refers to “dal” in the recipe, by which she means the lentils if you are using them instead of the moong dal.*

[Chia Pudding with Roasted Jaggery Blueberries](#)

Chef Donna’s Notes: Jaggery is the unrefined, boiled-down juice of sugar cane or date palm sap. It is highly complex in flavor because it retains many of the minerals from the sap. It’s not as sweet as one would think; you can substitute dark brown sugar, but the flavor lacks the complexity of jaggery.*

**Chef Donna suggests visiting an Indian grocer to source your ingredients. You can also find the spices and seasoning on line. [Vibrant India](#) author Chitra Agrawal suggests consulting <http://www.thokalath.com/grocery/> to locate an Indian grocer in your area.*