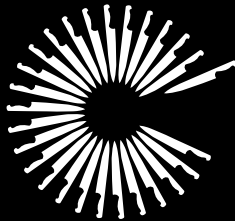
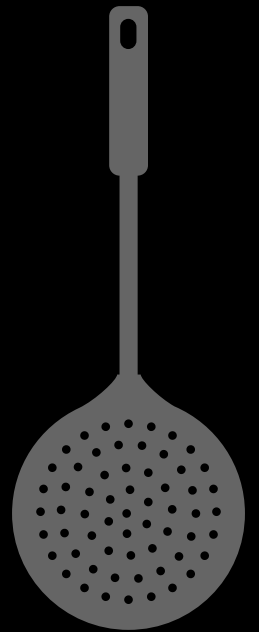
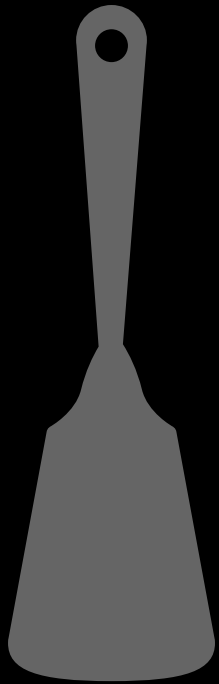


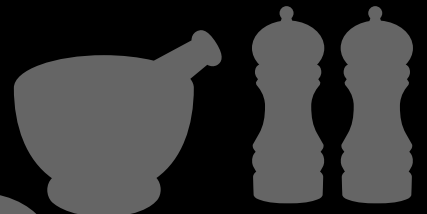
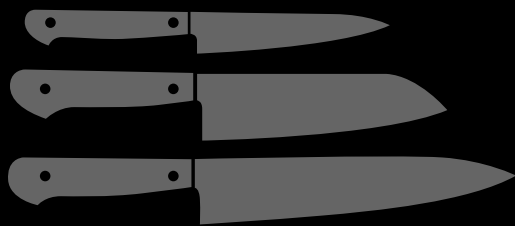


COOKERY SCHOOL

Indian street food
with Alfred Prasad



GREAT
BRITISH
CHEFS





Alfred Prasad

Alfred Prasad is credited with elevating the reputation of British Indian food with his delicate treatment of fresh, seasonal produce. Becoming the youngest Indian chef to receive a Michelin star at the age of 29, he retained this accolade at Tamarind 12 years. He is now pursuing his own restaurant empire, which he hopes will showcase the variety, as well as the quality, of Indian food.

Alfred Prasad grew up in Chennai in southern India, his father and mother both influencing his future career in their individual ways. In his father's family, vegetarian cooking was central and Alfred Prasad spent hours in his vegetable garden, tending ingredients on their way to the dinner table. His mother's Anglo-Indian background meant that she had great skill with preparing meat and joined her in the kitchen at every opportunity, helping with preparation and enjoying the results. He told the World Gourmet Society: "Even now, I treasure those moments when I was together with my family and learned how rewarding it could be to work with great ingredients and to simply have good food in my fingers." Extensive travel around India with his parents also exposed him to the incredible breadth of Indian regional cuisine, something he explored further in his training and career.

After completing a diploma in hotel management in 1993, he was hand-picked for advanced chef training during which he worked at two of India's finest and most iconic restaurants – Bukhara, at the Maurya Sheraton in New Delhi, which specialises in north-west frontier cuisine, and Dakshin at the Park Sheraton in Chennai, which focuses on the cuisine of the southern states of India. During his six years with these restaurants he further developed his appreciation for the variety of India's different food cultures, a specialism he has continued to develop throughout his career.

In 2001, he moved to the UK to take up the job of sous chef at Tamarind in London's Mayfair. Within a year he was promoted to the restaurant group's Director of Cuisine, which meant he oversaw their

four venues – Tamarind, Imli Street and Zaika in London, and Tamarind of London in California. He maintained Tamarind's Michelin star for twelve years, in the process becoming the youngest Indian chef to receive a Michelin star at the age of 29.

Alfred Prasad's food at Tamarind offered a highly original take on British notions of traditional Indian cooking, described on the restaurant's website as "delicately balancing creativity and authenticity". Bringing fresh, seasonal ingredients to life, he sought to "preserve the purity and flavour of ingredients", enhancing them with subtle spicing and a light touch and eschewing the stereotype that Indian food is heavy and greasy. Drawing on the south Indian coastal cuisine of his upbringing, his eclectic menus featured fresh British seafood such as sea bass and scallops, adapted to Indian flavours, as well as the game and meat more traditional to north-west Indian Moghul cuisine.

His specialities included Slow-cooked dahl makhni with tomatoes and cream, as well more meaty offerings such as Roasted rack of lamb, fenugreek-potato matchsticks and wild mushroom pulao. Dessert was a touch more European influenced, with dishes like Stewed pear with winter berry coulis, fennel and ginger ice cream to finish.

At Imli Street in Soho, the modern small-plates menu was more casual, but the enthusiasm for the crafted specialities of his birth country remained. His menu encompassed street food, travel snacks and south Indian/Sri Lankan coastal specialities, as well as relatively unknown international crossover cuisine, such as Indian-Chinese.

He left The Tamarind Collection in 2015, citing their focus on northern Indian cuisine. From Alfred Prasad's early travels with his parents to his chef education in India, he has always been passionate about the diversity of his country's food offerings, telling *The Caterer* "there is so much more to offer, rather than the same tikka masala, rogan josh and jalfrezi."

Alfred Prasad is an ambassador for the charity FoodCycle and works with them to reduce food waste and redirect surplus food to those in poverty and social isolation. He says: "I love their message that food poverty and food wastage should simply not co-exist." He also cycled over 250 miles in only five days, across challenging terrain in Rajasthan, to help raise money for Action Against Hunger. He has often spoken of a desire to see more women in the kitchen and his hopes for an even split in his kitchens: "I do feel that women are more naturally creative, great at multi tasking and would make great chefs. We should be more pro-active in making it possible for them to thrive in the restaurant business."

His future plans include building his own restaurant group, showcasing the lesser-known regional delights of India, and he is also working on his first book.



Idli (steamed rice cakes)

Serves 6

1 packet idli batter, 1kg
(available in Asian stores)

Or to make batter:
500g idli rice
250g whole white urad dal
¼ tsp fenugreek seeds
125g cooked white rice
Pinch sea salt
15 ml sesame or vegetable oil

Wash the idli rice twice and soak in plenty of water for 4 hours

In a separate bowl, combine the urad dal and fenugreek seeds. Wash and soak for 4 hours

Drain and grind the urad dal and fenugreek seeds in a blender, adding a little water as necessary, to make a smooth, thick batter. Transfer to a large bowl and set aside

Drain the rice, add to the same blender jar and grind to a smooth batter, adding a little water as necessary.

Add the cooked rice and grind well to form a smooth batter. Pour this into the bowl containing the urad dal mixture, add salt and combine well. Cover and let it rest in a warm corner of the kitchen overnight or for 8 hours. It will ferment and rise considerably



Kanchipuram idli

Serves 6

1 packet idli batter, 1kg
(available in Asian stores)
Or prepare batter as per
previous recipe

¼ tsp turmeric powder
¼ tsp dry ginger powder
1½ tbsp sesame seed oil
3 tsp ghee
1 tsp Bengal gram (channa dal)
1½ tsp urad dal
1 tsp mustard seeds
¼ tsp asafoetida
1 tsp cumin seeds
5 black peppercorns, slightly crushed
2 tbsp cashew nuts, broken
1 or 2 sprigs of curry leaves, washed
well and finely chopped
2 tbsp coriander leaves, washed and
finely chopped

Add turmeric powder and dry ginger powder to the prepared batter, mix well and reserve

Heat the sesame oil and ghee in a small frying pan. Add the Bengal gram (channa dal) and sauté on a medium heat for 1 minute

Add the urad dal and when it starts colouring, add the mustard seeds. When the mustard seeds start crackling, add the asafoetida, cumin and peppercorns; sauté for a further minute

Add the cashew nuts and curry leaves and sauté for 30 seconds. The cashew nuts should be lightly or medium browned

Add everything to the batter with the coriander leaves and mix well

Grease the idli moulds (or ramekins) using a little oil and spoon the batter into them until almost full

If using a hob-top steamer, ensure the water in the steamer is at a rolling boil before placing the plates in for steaming. Steam for 8–10 minutes (no longer), over a medium heat

Remove the trays (or ramekins) from the steamer and run cold water over the underside. Run a knife around the edges of the idlis before scooping them out and serving immediately.



Gunpowder idli

Serves 6

Gunpowder, or molagapodi, is a hot, aromatic spice blend, usually made by lightly frying whole white Urad dal, Bengal gram (channa dal), roasted peanuts, dry red chillies, asafoetida, white sesame seeds and salt. This mixture is then coarsely ground. It is most often eaten as a side condiment to idlis, with a little sesame oil or ghee. In this recipe, the gunpowder is added to the idlis and steamed.

1 packet idli batter, 1kg
(available in Asian stores)
Or prepare batter as per previous
recipe

1½ tbsp gunpowder or molagapodi
spice mix

Grease the idli moulds (or ramekins) using a little oil and spoon the batter into them until almost full

Spoon some gunpowder in the top centre (a large pinch)

If using a hob-top steamer, ensure the water in the steamer is at a rolling boil before placing the plates in for steaming. Steam for 8–10 minutes (no longer), over a medium heat

Remove the trays (or ramekins) from the steamer and run cold water over the underside. Run a knife around the edges of the idlis before scooping them out and serving immediately



Potato masala idli

Serves 6

1 packet idli batter, 1kg
(available in Asian stores)
Or prepare batter as per
previous recipe

2 tbsp coconut oil or vegetable oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp channa dal
1½ tsp urad dal
¼ tsp asafoetida
10–12 curry leaves
2 cooking onions, finely sliced
2.5cm ginger, finely chopped
3 green finger chillies, chopped
½ tsp turmeric powder
Salt to taste
500g Maris Piper potatoes, boiled
and roughly mashed
Juice of half a lemon

Heat the oil in a wok and add the mustard seeds; when they start crackling, add the channa dal, urad dal, asafoetida and curry leaves. Sauté until the urad and channa dals have turned pale brown

Add the onions, ginger and green chilli and stir-fry until the onions have softened

Add the turmeric powder, salt and sauté for a further minute. Add the boiled potatoes then combine all the ingredients. Check the seasoning and cook for 4–5 minutes

Take the wok off the heat, add the lemon juice, mix well and allow to cool

Grease idli plates (or ramekins) with a little oil. Spoon some idli batter into the plates until half full then add a layer of potato masala and cover with more batter so the plate is almost full

If using a hob-top steamer, ensure the water in the steamer is at a rolling boil before placing the plates in for steaming. Steam for 8–10 minutes (no longer), over a medium heat

Remove the trays (or ramekins) from the steamer and run cold water over the underside. Run a knife around the edges of the idlis before scooping them out and serving immediately



Coconut chutney

100g grated coconut, fresh or frozen
2.5cm ginger, chopped fine
1 green finger chilli, deseeded and chopped
Salt to taste
1½ tbsp coconut oil
2 dried red chilli
1½ tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp urad dal
10-12 curry leaves

Grind together the coconut, ginger and chilli with a little water to a smooth consistency. Add the salt and transfer to a mixing bowl

Heat the oil in a small pan over a medium heat and fry the dried red chilli for 20 seconds

Add the mustard seeds and once they start crackling, add the urad dal and when it starts turning pale brown, add the curry leaves

Add this to the ground coconut and mix well



Pav bhaji (vegetable curry with toasted brioche baps)

Serves 4

For the bhaji:

1 small cauliflower, cut into florets
3 medium Maris Piper Potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 green pepper, chopped
1 tsp ginger and garlic paste
½ tsp turmeric powder
1 tsp chilli powder
Salt
4 fresh, ripe tomatoes, puréed
2 tbsp petit pois
1 tbsp pav bhaji masala
1 tbsp unsalted butter
1 tbsp fresh coriander, chopped
juice of ½ lemon
1 tbsp red onion, chopped (optional)

For pav baps:

8 (20 g) brioche baps
1 tsp unsalted butter (to grill the brioche baps)

Boil the cauliflower and potatoes until tender and reserve

Heat the oil in a saucepan and sauté the green peppers for 2 minutes. Add the ginger and garlic paste and sauté for a further 2 minutes

Add the turmeric powder, chilli powder and salt. Mix well and sauté for 1 minute

Add the tomato purée, petit pois, boiled potatoes, cauliflower, pav bhaji masala and butter

Mix well and bring to the boil then let it simmer on low heat for 20–25 minutes

Mash lightly then check the seasoning and add more of the Pav bhaji masala if required

Transfer to a serving bowl. Sprinkle the juice of ½ a lemon, chopped coriander and chopped onions (if using)

To finish, brush the baps with butter and toast for 10 seconds on a hot frying pan, allowing it to brown along the edges and serve with the bhaji



Malai kulfi (pistachio ice cream)

Serves 8–10

For the kulfi:

450g double cream
450g condensed milk
5g dried rose petals
100g pistachio, chopped or flakes
1 tbsp rose water

Other ingredients

1 tbsp pistachio flakes
Rose syrup
1 lemon (zest only)
1 punnet raspberries, halved
1 punnet micro amaranth cress

For the kulfi, whip the double cream to stiff peaks and set aside

In a large mixing bowl, add the condensed milk, rose water, chopped pistachios and dried rose petals and combine well

Fold in the whipped cream, transfer to moulds and freeze

To serve, remove the pistachio kulfi from the freezer, de-mould and place as desired on plates

Place a few dots of rose syrup on each plate

Sprinkle lemon zest, pistachio flakes and raspberry halves. Place a sprig or two of the micro amaranth cress on top and serve immediately