



A Life Of Spice: Stories of food, culture and life

Monica Bhide , Simi Jois (Photographer)

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In *A Life of Spice* celebrated writer Monica Bhide explores her romance with food. As in any romance, there are moments of great heartache and unbelievable happiness; betrayals and breakups; and, of course, intimacy. The essays in this book show how food affects all the areas of our lives: family, friends, love, culture, faith, and more. They capture the delights of cooking as wooing and of food as nurturer, and the sadness of the heartbreak kitchen. This collection of powerful and thought-provoking vignettes makes us examine our relationship with food deeply—and what food really means to us. *A Life of Spice* gives readers a front-row view—and deliciously stolen peeks behind the curtain—into those choice moments that define a lifetime.

Celebrating the powerful memories of food that bind us all together, *A Life of Spice* features essays that first appeared on Monica's blog and in national and international publications, as well as new, never-before-read tales of family and food.

Advance praise for *A Life of Spice*

"Monica writes stories about food, but often they are really stories about searching. She looks for what the world will reveal if you ask questions of the things we usually keep silent. She's a generous writer, seeking the finer, richer sides of us." -- Francis Lam, editor-at-large, *Clarkson Potter*, and *New York Times Magazine* columnist

"Monica Bhide is more than a food writer. She's a chronicler of culture and family history. She is a romantic for the bond between parent and child. She is an essayist of her own heart and mind, fearlessly searching for the truth in both. She is endlessly fascinating to read." -- Tim Carman, James Beard Award-winning food writer for *The Washington Post*

"Monica's stories take us on a journey through time, across continents and cultures. With her we fast and feast for love, we share the wonder of fairy tales with a child, we feel the longing for a lost homeland, we delight in culinary discoveries, and we find our own identity in a new land. Throughout Monica reminds us that the essence of food is love—love for our family, our history, our humanity." -- Elise Bauer, Creator of *SimplyRecipes.com*

"Monica Bhide's unbridled devotion to food, words, family, and history is crystal clear in this delicious collection. Whatever Monica's subject—her father as a young boy, the connection between her family and their mouthwatering food, or the importance of saving recipes—she writes with warmth, a keen eye, and an open and abundant heart." -- Elissa Altman, author of *Poor Man's Feast*

A Life Of Spice: Stories of food, culture and life Details

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From Reader Review A Life Of Spice: Stories of food, culture and life for online ebook

Praveen Ladwani says

Books like these keep the creative culinary alive. Its not a cookbook like the traditional ones. Its full of soul-satisfying food memories, its beautiful to browse with gorgeous and stunning pictures by Simi (I think this is a must when its about food). She is always inspiring and never fails to reinvent the wheel in new and creative ways. Try this one and I am sure you will be hooked.

MaryBeth says

Delightful! Anyone who likes cooking, travel, Indian culture or happy family dynamics will enjoy this series of essays and newspaper columns by a talented writer.

Susan Rosen says

funny when I signed up for this giveaway this free Paperback book the cover and the write-up inspired me to cook an Indian dish. then when I won this gem I was thinking to myself, 'the secret sure does work'!

Ritu says

As an expat Indian living in the United States, I read this book during the first couple of years after I moved. I remember crying and feeling deeply touched by the stories in it. Bhide's writing created a cocoon and I think, even my crying was a remembrance. It felt like a precious, familiar feeling.

Like many other expats, food is one of my links back home and I especially love recreating the dishes of my childhood, like the Punjabi kadhi my mother makes, even if it takes a long time. So, food is a very evocative topic for me. In this book, I also loved the way Monica Bhide talked about larger things - such as what is real cooking, how to pass on your love of food to your children and what authenticity means (a topic that comes up for me often - as a non-traditional person living outside my country, for me, authentic cooking is not just about recreating dishes that were part of my childhood but also picking up and incorporating new things and sometimes changing up the old)

This is a lovely book. Food is about memories. If you are not Indian but love to cook, it will give you an insight into the thought process that food-loving North Indians have and how we approach food. If you an expat, you will find a feeling of homecoming in this book.

Kimberly says

Not really up my alley yet she is an excellent writer and the cultural explorations are interesting.

Richa Kambo says

This is an amazing piece of work that brings beautiful memories of indian delicacies and tingling in taste buds. It truly exhibits the author's love and passion for food and her incredible style of sharing her thoughts with great stories. What attracted me most in this book were the enticing pictures that are so real and add so much meaning and value to the book itself making it a very interesting read. The spices had never been presented so beautifully before with the lively pictures! The creativity and imagination of photographer Simi Jois is incredible. The photography keeps you hooked to the book and make you fall in love one more time with the indian food and culture. I am grateful to Monica Bhinde and Simi Jois for their magnificent work and rekindling the love for indian spices :)

Elizabeth Ann Besa-Quirino says

Poignant. I had to hold back the tears many times. Monica knows how to grip your heart and make you listen. Every story is a gem with a priceless lesson to learn. Very inspiring. I have read all the stories again and again. My favorite is "Why I Don't Cook for My Parents".

Brette Sember says

Bhide manages to find and describe not only the scents and tastes of the food that fills her memories, but the music of it as well. In this incredibly well-crafted collection of essays, Bhide shows us how food is the link that ties all of us together and explores how it enhances and magnifies our emotions and experiences. She discovers the melody that food and spices play and amplifies it so we can see and hear it. Bhide has lived an extraordinary life - from the Middle East to India to the US, which in itself is fascinating. Blend that with her depth of insight about how food is a driving life force in our experiences and you have an outstanding book of essays. I could not put this down. I would finish one essay and think "wow" and have to move on to the next. Her essays show that food is a piece of magic we are lucky to consume every single day.

Stephanie says

A Life of Spice is a collection of food essays that range in tone from highly personal (Bhide's account of her father's escape from Multan during the Partition of India starts the book off) to light and humorous ("Is the Food Better If the Kitchen is Glamorous?") and I have to admit that I was hooked from the first page and couldn't put the book down.

The essays exude a personal touch – you get to know Bhide and her family and friends – but food is the bonding ingredient. Some of the essays focus on Bhide's cultural background (Indian) and her adaptation to American foods (these essays are among my favourites in the book), while others talk about her relationship with food writing and cooking.

Interspersed with the essays are snippets about Bhide's favourite spices, including Fennel Seeds and Star Anise. Bhide talks about why she loves the spice and then gives suggestions on different ways to incorporate

it into your cooking.

More than just a collection of food essays, A Life of Spice is a look into Bhide's life and how food plays an integral part in it and it's a wonderful journey.

Yuska Vonita says

I love this book. It really opens up my mind about culture and how food shapes it up.

Lalita says

A delightful read. And I so resonated with the author's cooking style - always by aroma, sound, texture, and approximation - but never (hardly ever) by tasting as one cooks, just as I learned from my mom. Then I realized that this is probably for the same passed-down-over-many-generations cultural reason as the author!

And the photographs are lovely!

Dee says

Reminded me of my grandmother's collection of essays written for the local paper and various writing groups. Her food descriptions are lovely, and the book is a sweet little palate cleanser.

Ilana says

With a lot of passion and deep knowledge of culture and food stories, Monica Bhide creates a world where spices are part of life and even life itself. This aromated collection of short storie are partly auto-biographic, partly careful reconstructions of cultural histories, written with the dedication of someone that knows, dreams, and smells her domain. I had the priviledge to read the first draft of her collection of short stories and also her regular foodie blog posts, but at the end of this new book I felt that Monica deeply found her voice with this volume of stories, because every single histories shares with the readers a part of herself and generously telling stories plays such a big part of her process of becoming a writer. This new collection by Monica Bhide is strongly recommended to anyone interested in culture, history, food research but also in good writing and inspiring life stories. Having the priviledge of becoming a copy in advance of the book, at the end of the lecture I had the sad feeling that I want to read more and thus, I cannot wait for a new pleasant writing surprise from this very talented and generous writer.

Sandra Beckwith says

It's not very often that you find a writer whose essays read like best-selling fiction. Whether I was transported to the Alps while reading "A Deep Red" or practically smelling the sizzling spices in "Save Your Recipes Before It's Too Late," I was in another world while reading this book -- a world that was a bit exotic,

and yet relevant. I recommend A Life of Spice to readers who enjoy food, stories, lessons, and love. This remarkable book has all that -- and more.

Luca Marchiori says

I am so happy to be in possession of another book by Monica Bhide as I can never get enough of her writing. Her prose is so accurate that you can smell, even taste the food she describes without it ever passing your lips: a rare talent.

In A Life of Spice, Bhide treats us to a collection of stories and articles about her personal love affair with food and we really feel that we've been let into her secret world as she transmits her memory and insight to us. This is not a recipe book, but at the end of each section Bhide talks about a spice, each one beautifully illustrated by the hugely talented photographer Simi Jois. Here Bhide demystifies them as she goes giving us the courage to open our spice cupboard up and use what is inside to create our own versions of her memories and anecdotes.

It's hard to pick a favorite amongst these stories which are as jewel-like as Jois's photographs. But I must say that 'A Day in Paris' in which Bhide describes her experiences on a cooking course in the French capital speaks to me as an ex-resident of that city and an alumnus of such courses. We get a beautiful illustration of the fun-loving character of the writer that makes us want to meet her.

I rarely give five-star reviews but this book is now the favorite Bhide on my shelf and I enjoyed it from cover to cover. Highly recommended for anyone who has ever eaten anything.

(Disclosure: author provided ARC in return for an honest review.)
