

Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard

on

Your Table



**Traditional
Indian
Flavors and
Recipes
prepared at
home with
Ian &
Natasha**

Natasha's Five spice lamb chops, stuffed okra, yellow lentils, and cumin rice paired with Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard Flower Day Riesling

Photographed By Paul Brissman

Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard Wines on Your Table

Part of the beauty of winemaking is the knowledge that as soon as a bottle leaves our doors, it can find its way to a dinner table and be shared and enjoyed alongside a lovely meal. We delight in hearing stories about particular pairings that were delicious with our wines, as they inspire us not only in our own kitchens, but in the farm, cellar, and tasting room as well!



Natasha Mathias & Ian Somaiya in their kitchen in New Jersey.

We enter Ian and Natasha's beautiful New Jersey home as delectable aromas emanate from the kitchen. Both were born in India but have lived in the US most of their lives. The two share a passion for food and wine, and often entertain. Natasha is a avid home cook who loves to introduce friends and neighbors to the flavors of India. Born and raised in Bangalore, she moved to the US in her early 20s. "Once I came to the United States I missed my home and started to cook Indian food more. For me, food is a love language, so I spend a lot of time researching different recipes and cuisines and testing out various combinations."

Today, the focus is on dishes from the eastern part of India. Spicy lamb, stuffed okra, lentils, and aromatic rice are on the menu.

"Much of Indian food gets its abundant tastes and aromas from tadka, or tempering, a heat-based infusion technique that relies on fat to deliver the flavor," explains Natasha. Tadka is also the term for the finished product. Like a sauce or dressing, tadka enlivens a dish without seasoning the food itself. An Indian meal can include four or five dishes prepared with their own tadka, meaning a single meal can easily contain 10 to 15 spices, each with a distinct flavor profile.

Natasha explains "flavor combinations vary by region... in western parts of India mustard is very prominent, so mustard and or mustard oil is used. In the north you will find cumin and dry red chili, and in the south it is whole black mustard, green chilies, and curry leaves." The number of ingredients notwithstanding, Indian food is not that complicated to cook. "A meal should never take more than 30 minutes to throw together," says Natasha. "Who has time?"

When asked about pairing wines with Indian dishes and flavors, Natasha notes, "Indian food has such a vast variety of flavors and combinations that it is hard to give you a short answer. Basically, I look at the types of spices I'm using in each dish and pair the wines accordingly... Rieslings with a touch of sweetness can be a great compliment to the rich spices found in many Indian dishes."

Looking to explore the concept of wine pairing and spice combinations further, we reached out to Nick Robinson, a sommelier with over a decade of experience in the industry, including a stint at one of New York's top Indian restaurants: Indian Accent. "Riesling is the go-to wine when serving Indian food," says Nick, who finds this match especially rewarding. When pairing wine with aromatic spices, such as black cardamom, cinnamon, and star anise, Nick recommends wines with a higher alcohol content like our riper styles of Reserve Dry Riesling or Riesling Magdalena Vineyard that are better suited to enhance these flavors. On the other hand, lighter wines with floral notes like our Dry Riesling or Flower Day Riesling are more suitable for spices like ginger and mustard. "Rich food requires a lot of acid to maintain balance", explains Nick. "Acidity will also highlight all the amazing aromatics that Indian chefs know how to use so well."

After enjoying this delicious meal with Ian and Natasha paired with our Riesling, we enthusiastically concur and are very lucky that Natasha has shared the ingredients and recipes to recreate this meal at home. Let's dive in!

Natasha's Five spice lamb chops, stuffed okra, yellow lentils, and cumin rice

Prep and cook time: 30 minutes (plus three hours to marinate)

Servings: 4

Note: If any of these spices and pastes are not available at your local supermarket, they're easy to buy online. We checked!

Five Spice (Panch Phoran) Lamb Chops

Ingredients:

- 8-12 lamb chops, depending on size and appetite
- 5 tbsp. Five Spice Mix (Panch Phoran) or substitute the following:
 - 1 tbsp. fenugreek seeds
 - 1 tbsp. nigella seeds
 - 1 tbsp. cumin seeds
 - 1 tbsp. black mustard seeds
 - 1 tbsp. fennel seeds
 - 1 tbsp. ginger paste
 - 1 tbsp. garlic paste
 - 1 tbsp. olive oil

Toast the 5 spices in a dry pan over medium heat until fragrant. Pour them into a spice grinder or pestle and mortar to crush them into a powder. Then add ginger paste, garlic paste, and olive oil. Stir until smooth.

Brush or rub each lamb chop with enough spice mix to cover both sides without looking breaded. Let marinate for at least 3 hours or overnight.

When ready to eat, grill lamb chops over medium heat for 2-3 minutes on each side for medium rare. Let sit for a few minutes before serving.



Stuffed Okra (Bharwa Bhindi)

In India, this dish is usually served fried, but baking results in a crispier texture and less grease.

Ingredients: 20 okra pods

Stuffing:

1 tsp. paprika

½ tsp. red turmeric

1 tbsp. ground cumin

¼ tsp. garam masala

3 tbsp. chickpea flour (besan)

1. Rinse the okra pods in a colander and dry with a paper towel. Cut off the crowns; then make a slit lengthwise in each, leaving the two sides attached. Set aside.
2. Stir the spices together in a small bowl.
3. With a small spoon, stuff each okra and place, in a single layer, on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake in the oven at 400° F 10 to 12 minutes or until stuffing puffs up to a golden color and the okra is crisp but not brown.
4. Let okra sit for a few minutes before serving to let the stuffing crisp up.



Yellow Lentils (Toor Daal)

Yellow lentils have a nutty flavor that goes well with grilled meat or fish. Cooked with onions, tomato, ginger, and garlic, and finished with a spicy tadka (tempering) giving it a deep flavor. In many households, toor daal is typically cooked in an instant pot or pressure cooker, but a regular pot works well too.

Ingredients:

1 cup yellow lentils
1 tsp. garlic, minced
2 tbsp. onion, chopped
1 tbsp. tomato, chopped
1 tbsp. olive oil
4 cups water
½ tsp. turmeric
salt to taste

1. Rinse lentils until the water runs clear.
2. Place lentils, garlic, onion, and tomato in a pot. Add oil and water and stir. Heat the water and let simmer for 20 to 30 minutes or until the lentils are so soft you can make a paste between two fingers. Add turmeric and salt to taste. Stir with a wooden ladle or spoon until the lentils are mushy and the ingredients are well mixed. When ready to serve, add tadka.

Tadka (tempering)

Tadka is one of the most commonly used techniques to add flavor to Indian dishes. Letting spices bloom in heated oil deepens the profile.

Ingredients:

2 tbsp. olive oil
1 tsp. black mustard seeds
½ tsp. cumin
1 red chili
4-5 curry leaves (See <https://myindianstove.com/curry-leaf-plant/> for substitutes.)

In a small pot, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Add the spices. When the oil splatters, the tempering is done.

When ready to serve, add tadka to lentils.



Cumin Rice (Jeera Pulao) with Toasted Spices

Basmati rice is the best rice for this mild but aromatic dish.

Ingredients:

1 cup basmati rice
½ tsp salt
1 ¾ cups water
2 tsp. ghee (clarified butter)
¼ cup green peas, fresh or thawed
Seasoning for toasted spices:
1-inch Indian cinnamon stick
4 cardamom pods
5 cloves
½ tsp. cumin seeds
½ tsp. peppercorns
1 bay leaf

1. If using fresh peas, blanch them first.
 2. Place rice, salt, water, and ghee in a pressure cooker, or on the stove, using the recipe on the box or bag.
 3. Toast spices in a little bit of oil.
 4. Add peas and spices before serving.
- To serve, arrange lamb chops and okra on each plate.
Serve rice and lentils in side dishes.

