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Indian Food: A Historical Companion

K. T. Achaya

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K. T. Achaya : Indian Food: A Historical Companion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Indian Food: A Historical Companion:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Indian Cuisine in Depth!By PamelaTThis is the most detailed work on the ingredients and other components of Indian cooking from a historical point of view down to the modern era that I have ever seen. It is a great achievement. It is well worth having if you are interested knowing all about this important subject, Indian Cuisine!

The cuisine of India is as ancient as it is varied, and in this attractive, oversized volume, food expert A.K. Achaya captures the full range and history of the Indian diet, from prehistoric times to the modern era. An informative volume that boasts over 150 black-and-white illustrations (including line drawings, photographs, and maps) and 55 color photographs on 20 plates, Indian Food draws on archaeology, anthropology, literature, philology, and botany to cook up a smorgasbord of fascinating facts about this exotic fare. Achaya begins with the earliest food preparations of paleolithic and neolithic times, the cooking of the Harappan people (archeological evidence suggests they may have eaten baked chapati--griddle-roasted wheat cakes--food still popular today). He covers the diet of the Aryans (using information found in their rich Vedic literature); examines regional cuisines, such as those of Karnataka, Hyderabad, Bengal, Gujarat, Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh; describes the customs, rituals, and beliefs observed by different communities and religious groups; and traces the gradual shift towards vegetarianism with the advent of Buddhism

and Jainism. In thirty-three boxed sections, he takes the reader on various sidetrips, touching on the Indian use of Bhang (cannabis) and opium, the history of ice cream (ranging from Marco Polo to Dolly Madison), the use of natural grains as the basis of early weight systems (3 black mustard seeds equaled 1 white mustard seed; 6 white mustard seeds equaled 1 middle-sized barley corn), and the names of alcoholic drinks that appear in Sanskrit literature, ranging from pre-Aryan Sura (made from barley or rice flour) to Harahuraka (wine made from black grapes from Afghanistan). Achaya also discusses non-Indian foods, such as tapioca, which was an important commodity for trade in South America as far back as 3000 BC, and the potato, first domesticated near Lake Titicaca, sometime between 5000 and 2000 BC. Indeed, the book provides a wealth of historical information on food in general, revealing that coffee may have been first used in Ethiopia, that the coconut evolved 20 million years ago in New Guinea, that carrots were first domesticated in Afghanistan (where they were greenish colored and rich in anthocyanin), and that the word banana is of African origin and may be connected with the Arabic word banan (fingers or toes). With illustrations ranging from neolithic cave paintings from Madhya Pradesh, to full color photographs of modern Indian foods, Indian Food offers a rich cornucopia of information on this flavorful and popular cuisine.

About the Author About the Author: K.T. Achaya is a renowned nutritionist who has written several other books on the history and culture of food in India.