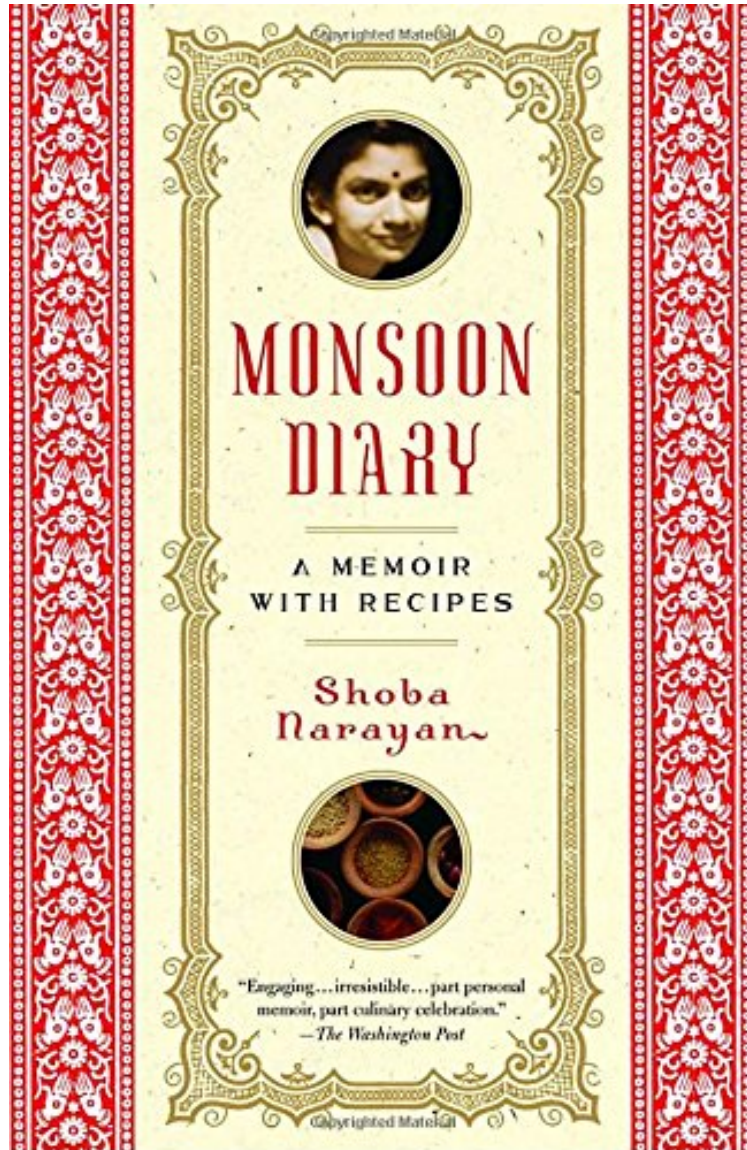


(Mobile ebook) Monsoon Diary: A Memoir with Recipes

## Monsoon Diary: A Memoir with Recipes

Shoba Narayan

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**Shoba Narayan : Monsoon Diary: A Memoir with Recipes** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Monsoon Diary: A Memoir with Recipes:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Creative memoirBy ReaderMs Narayan's first attempt is a good starter, keeps the reader engaged and has some good descriptions of culture and background. As someone coming from the same culture/background though i was able to see that she has been quite liberally creative in some areas..and given the # of readers who think this is an accurate description of culture - i want to clarify a few things...1 The

author's story appears to have been set in 90s-early 2000s. Indian cabbies (and passengers!!) are a dime a dozen in NYC during this time. She talks of a cabbie who is so carried away by a passenger from his part of the world that he gives up his fare, takes her and her friend home, feeds them and drops them home, like he never gets to drive any passenger from his part of the world. Totally unrealistic, unless something happened that we don't know of. Just simply put you get a nod or a few words of exchange in your native tongue with a cabbie from your part of the world generally, not this.<sup>2</sup> The average Indian middle class Brahmin family (or Tambrams as we are commonly called) - do not expect women to cook to judge whether or not they can go abroad on their own. Like it is everywhere some families are liberal and send their kids, some are more conservative and need more persuasion - persuasion commonly comes with some 'male' who can 'take care' of you, like a husband or a brother or someone. Cooking skills are important but no, setting deals with unrelated skills simply do not work, or generally setting deals itself with parents or people in authority rarely works. The author has spun a nice story out of a possible situation she had - by her description of her parents they seem quite liberal and may not have had big objections.<sup>3</sup> I was kinda tickled by some of her descriptions, especially of her grandmother (Nallamma) - who pocketed vegetables when the vendor was not looking (what I would call stealing :) and someone whom the vendors and other people thought was a nightmare/mean person. I appreciate the honesty but if my grandmom was that way I would have scanty respect for her:)) Other than these things, the food descriptions/recipes are good and authentic, and some parts really fun to read.<sup>2</sup> of 2 people found the following review helpful. Delicious Read By Zhara um Nikko Never mind where you were when you experienced the 'big events' of your life, instead, can you remember what were you eating? Shoba Nayaran remembers, and delivers those landmark flavors in print. From the comforting memories of her childhood, to the abuse suffered under her first graduate program, to her wedding and subsequent adjustment to married life, Shoba Narayan writes about each significant life event with an even hand, a light sense of humor, and perfectly chosen recipes to accompany every part of her story. This isn't your traditional cookbook, nor is it a plodding, self-aggrandizing autobiography. It is instead a book that moves along at a fast pace, giving us glimpses of intensely personal moments, but then quickly, breezily moving along to the next topic, the next recipe, the next memory. The reader is never bogged down in this parsimonious trip down memory lane. Instead, we receive exactly what is promised: a memoir with food. (and succulent food at that!) An excellent read, a fast read, a delicious read.<sup>0</sup> of 0 people found the following review helpful. A book for a train ride By Palocchina Well written, but too obvious (the descriptions and stories) for South Indians and too basic (the recipes) for most Indians. An easy read if you feel a little nostalgic!

Shoba Narayan's Monsoon Diary weaves a fascinating food narrative that combines delectable Indian recipes with tales from her life, stories of her delightfully eccentric family, and musings about Indian culture. Narayan recounts her childhood in South India, her college days in America, her arranged marriage, and visits from her parents and in-laws to her home in New York City. Monsoon Diary is populated with characters like Raju, the milkman who named his cows after his wives; the iron-man who daily set up shop in Narayan's front yard, picking up red-hot coals with his bare hands; her mercurial grandparents and inventive parents. Narayan illumines Indian customs while commenting on American culture from the vantage point of the sympathetic outsider. Her characters, like Narayan herself, have a thing or two to say about cooking and about life. In this creative and intimate work, Narayan's considerable vegetarian cooking talents are matched by stories as varied as Indian spices—sometimes pungent, mellow, piquant, and sweet. Tantalizing recipes for potato masala, dosa, and coconut chutney, among others, emerge from Narayan's absorbing tales about food and the solemn and quirky customs that surround it.

From Publishers Weekly Narayan, who grew up in Chennai, India, writes in humorous, tender prose about her family and their love of food. Rituals surrounding food are central to every aspect of life, such as the *choru-unnaal* ceremony of a child's first meal of rice and ghee. When her mother is pregnant with her brother and the women gather to feed her and chew betel, Narayan writes, "As they chewed and their lips and tongue became stained red, their jokes became more risqué, their gossip more personal, their bodies more horizontal." Food is intimacy and comfort, and Narayan's book neatly transitions between descriptions of her family's life and the meals that punctuated it. Recipes for staples such as rasam (a bean and rice comfort food) a wonderful recipe for upma (a semolina vegetable stew)—which she serves to a grumpy group of Americans—complement more festive recipes for snacks and meals such as inji curry (a pickle with ginger and tamarind). When Narayan comes to America for a year at Mount Holyoke, she misses her native food but, in a hilarious sequence of events involving two dead goldfish, chances upon a taxi driver from Kerala whose wife feeds her olan, made with pumpkin, black-eyed peas and coconut milk. Narayan's sparkling, insightful narrative makes for a delightful cultural and culinary read. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Weaving together stories from her remarkable life with tasty Indian vegetarian recipes, Narayan offers insights into Hindu culture and custom and contrasts her upbringing with life in her adopted America. Born and raised near Madras as a Brahmin in caste-conscious south India, she was part of an extended family of wonderful eccentrics. Her portraits of small-town life include the "iron man": no body builder, he went from house to house ironing clothes with the aid of a coal-fired iron. Shunning bottled milk, Narayan drank hers squirted straight from the udder to her

mouth. Food and the enjoyment of it were central to her family, so when Narayan won a fellowship to study in America, the only way the family would let her travel was for her to prepare a proper banquet for them. Reaching New England, she immersed herself in American life without giving up her vegetarianism. Following tradition, her family arranged for their daughter to marry an appropriate mate, and to her surprise, her family chose well. This is a delightful, stereotype-shattering memoir. Mark KnoblachCopyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "Shoba Narayan is that rarity in the food world: She has both a unique story and the lyrical skills to tell it." —Regina Schrambling, New York Times and Los Angeles Times food writer "A taste of a life that is exotic yet familiar, Monsoon Diary is as pungent and satisfying as a good curry. Reading it made me want to get on a plane to India—or at least eat in an Indian restaurant." —Sharon Boorstin, author of Let Us Eat Cake: Adventures in Food and Friendship "An entirely enchanting look at growing up in South India, in an exotic world populated by the flower woman, maamis, and the colorful and opinionated members of an extended Hindu family. Food and recipes are a powerful element in Shoba's story—tokens of identity and a passport to freedom." —Nancy Novgorod, editor in chief, Travel Leisure "Of all the many recipe-laced stories, fictional and otherwise, that seem to be arriving in bookstores lately, Shoba Narayan's funny, bluntly honest memoir stands sharply apart from the crowd. This is fresh, wonderful writing that captures the large personalities of Narayan's extended family (her own outspoken self included) and the texture of daily life in Tamil Nadu and Kerala—a life that also happens to be filled with spicy curries, pungent chutneys, and coconut-rich stews. It is a mouth-watering book from a gifted storyteller." —Margo True, Editor, Saveur