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AUGUST 2021

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# FOOD FOR THE SOUL



Sarah Todd on a visit to India



The cover of Sarah Todd's new book *My Indian Kitchen*

*Celebrity chef, restaurateur, TV host, speaker and author, Sarah Todd has more aces up her sleeve than many others*

**BINDU GOPAL RAO**

After juggling five jobs after school, including modeling to studying makeup, Sarah Todd has found her calling as a chef. In a tête-à-tête with SEEMA, she describes her eventful journey.

### DOWN MEMORY LANE

Growing up in the small town of Walkerston, west of Mackay in Queensland, Australia, Sarah was and her two brothers were raised by her mother who also worked full time.

“There wasn’t a lot of money, but to be honest, I never felt for a second that I did without anything. All I remember are happy times,” she says.

After leaving school at 17, she began – and left – studying for a business degree. In a month, she was working five jobs.

“My mission was to save as much money as I could,” Todd says. “Within 12 months, I had enough to put a deposit on a block of land.”

She won tickets to a fashion

show in Sydney through a magazine contest and got her first taste of fashion when a magazine editor in the audience offered her a gig.

“In between modeling jobs, I completed a diploma in makeup artistry and beauty therapy,” Todd says. “I opened my own salon at home, so I was kept very busy between modeling and my business. I needed a creative outlet, so I attended photography classes in the evening.”

Even while pregnant she continued working, modeling maternity wear until she was in her 38th week.

“When Phoenix was born, I immediately fell in love with this little boy,” Todd says. “Having children gives you a different perspective on life. For one, you become less selfish. When introducing solids, I decided to prepare his food myself. I always ate healthily but only really began cooking after he was born. I realized that if I was going to the trouble of cooking his food, it not only had to be nutritious, but it had to be tasty.”



*Baked cauliflower with pineapple sansav*

### FOOD FILE

Her journey into the world of food was a Eureka moment.

“It was during a particularly monotonous photoshoot in London and 60 outfit changes later,” Todd says. “I was sitting quietly having lunch when I thought if I was going to be away from my son, I wanted to do something I loved. I remember saying to the model sitting next to me, that I was going

to apply to Le Cordon Bleu and give myself a year to make a career from cooking. He told me I was going to be the next Nigella Lawson.”

In 2013 Todd finished on top of her class at Le Cordon Bleu, London and was one of 24 contestants on MasterChef Australia (finishing in the top 10) in 2014. Incidentally, it was her aloo gobi that drew the attention of the Indian community, instantly gaining her around 50,000 followers on social media. In 2015 she opened her first restaurant in India, Antares. She co-owns and operates it, even rebuilding it after a fire in 2019. Her journey of the trials and tribulations of setting up a business in India was part of a six-part series, “My Restaurant in India.”

She wrote her first cookbook, “The Healthy Model Cookbook” in 2016, and published her second cookbook, “My Indian Kitchen,” this year.

### INDIA CALLING

Backed by her training in French cuisine and her six years traveling across India, she ensured the food at Antares focuses on local produce in a modern shared dining experience with a touch of spice.

Likewise, in “My Indian Kitchen,” the recipes are inspired by everyday people.

“I drew inspiration from street food vendors, families who shared their meals and homes with me and chefs who generously passed on recipes and tips,” Todd says. “I am fascinated by the incredible diversity in flavors, methods, and culture in the art of Indian cuisine. My goal is to introduce the novice to Indian cuisine by giving the techniques to create Indian inspired dishes. For the more experienced in Indian cooking, I hope the book inspires them to be creative and play around with the cuisine.”

She believes that Australian cuisine is diverse, focusing on quality ingredients that lend themselves well to marrying with flavors across India. Her philosophy in the kitchen involves making quick, healthy, flavorsome dishes in 20 minutes for

**“THIS IS A TRADITION I GREW UP WITH AND ONE I CONTINUE TO ENJOY WITH MY SON. SHARING A MEAL FUELS OUR BODY, MIND, AND SOUL”**



*Sarah Todd cooking with her son*

weeknight meals.

“A meal lovingly prepared in the home must be enjoyed with loved ones while sitting around the table,” Todd says. “This is especially important for young children to interact with other family members and discuss the day’s events. This is a tradition I grew up with and one I continue to enjoy with my son. Sharing a meal fuels our body, mind, and soul.”

For someone who believes that food means togetherness and a way to celebrate and bring people together, she admits that digital media is a great way to inspire others and be inspired.

### FUTURE PERFECT

She admits the period of the pandemic has been most challenging for her.

“My businesses in India have been severely impacted



*South Indian Madras curry with prawns and coconut rice*

as I was unable to make my monthly trips back to India,” Todd says. “However, as the saying goes, ‘necessity is the mother of invention,’ so I have channeled my energy into creating food products. It is something I wanted to do for a long time but never had the time. I will be launching them in a few months.”

When she is not cooking, Todd enjoys playing VR games and engaging in other fun activities with her 10-year-old son.

“In fact, he even enjoys cooking with me, something we did a lot of during lockdown,” she says.

Looking ahead she has a lot of things in the works.

“The lockdown has certainly affected the timelines, but everything will fall in place soon enough,” Todd says. “I have been scouting the perfect location for my next restaurant in Delhi ... I’m also coming up with a range of food products very soon. Watch this space.”