

# FOOD CHAIN

Our third Guest Editor Dan Doherty talks to Zoe Perrett about explosive Indian flavours and why he admires chef Alfred Prasad

Written by Dan Doherty | Images ©Anders Schønnemann

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#### DAN'S FAVOURITE DINING DESTINATIONS

- Goodman [goodmanrestaurants.com](http://goodmanrestaurants.com)
  - L'Anima [lanima.co.uk](http://lanima.co.uk)
  - Honey & Co. [honeyandco.co.uk](http://honeyandco.co.uk)
  - Zucca [zuccalondon.com](http://zuccalondon.com)
  - José [josepizarro.com](http://josepizarro.com)
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#### DEFINING ALFRED'S REFINED INDIAN FOOD

Until recently, Alfred was Director of Cuisine at Michelin-starred Tamarind of Mayfair and its siblings – the same-named Californian outpost; street-food driven Imli Street; and the newly-relaunched Zaika of Kensington. Although the Central India-born chef has a fine command of the kind of refined North Indian food Tamarind specialises in, you'd be wise to note that Alfred's South Indian stuff is also absolutely unmissable.

Alfred has held tight to his Michelin star for the past 12 years, ever since he received it at the age of 29 and became the youngest so-lauded Indian chef. Innovation comes naturally to him, but you won't catch him applying a fancy bell or whistle to a dish at the expense of the ingredients' own intrinsic qualities.

He's less precious about keeping his vast culinary knowledge to himself, leading masterclasses at Divertimenti and currently compiling a cookbook. His own London restaurant is in the planning stages; a venue which, it seems safe to say, is certain to spice up the scene.





## DAN ON ALFRED PRASAD

I first visited Tamarind of Mayfair quite a few years ago, before I had the pleasure of meeting Alfred in person. His food blew me away, refined yet traditional; everything you'd expect from a Michelin-starred Indian restaurant. It really struck a chord with me, as around that same time, I had visited a few other venues that aspired to offer the same but seemed to miss the point completely.

Fast-forward eight-odd years and we finally met properly, sat in The Drapers Arms in North London for the briefing on the Action Against Hunger India Cycle that we both took part in last year. As a native Indian, Alfred helped us all on the trip; not just with translation, but also by sharing his vast knowledge of his home country. It made me feel a little ashamed of how little I know about Great Britain. It wasn't just food, either, but also the way he connected with people, some not even speaking his language or dialect. It just goes to show what a big heart he has.

Spending those couple of weeks with Alfred really inspired me to learn more about Indian food, the rationale behind it,

and also to further explore my own country. On the trip, we enjoyed some amazing Indian food – notably, various thalis (plated meals) and the crêpe-like dosa. Dahi vadi (a snack dish of savoury doughnuts soaked in cold yogurt with spices and chutneys) also blew me away. Amazing.

Indian food has always been on my mind. In fact, the bread I bake to order at Duck & Waffle is actually based on a naan recipe. The recipe I chose to share here is very much inspired by Indian flavours. It's a dish that's been on my menu for a few years, and its name, 'hara bhara', means 'fresh and green' – the perfect descriptive term for the marinade. It goes brilliantly with the smokey aubergine; the freshness of the yogurt cutting through.

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## HOW DAN IS CHAMPIONING THE CHEFS OF TOMORROW...

Unlike many in the industry who are merely concerned about staying at the top of their own game, Dan is only too happy to offer the country's rising talent a leg-up.



## ALFRED PRASAD'S LAMB SHANK CURRY

SERVES: 4

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 4 green cardamom pods
- 6 cloves
- 3 medium onions, sliced
- 4 lamb shanks, washed and dried
- 3 tbsp ginger-garlic paste (made by smoothly pureeing equal parts of each ingredient)
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- salt, to taste
- 4 tbsp yoghurt
- 3 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- ½ tsp garam masala
- ½ bunch fresh coriander, leaves only, chopped

### METHOD

Heat the oil in a saucepan large enough to accommodate 4 lamb shanks. Once hot, add the cinnamon, cardamom and cloves, and sauté for 30 seconds.

Add the sliced onions and sauté on medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until golden-brown.

Add the lamb shanks and sear over high heat for 5 minutes, stirring constantly.

Add the ginger-garlic paste, stir well for a couple of minutes, add the turmeric, chilli powder and salt, then lower the heat and sauté for a further 5 minutes.

Add the yoghurt and sauté for 5 minutes over high heat.

Add the chopped tomato, stir well, and simmer for 15 minutes or until the chopped tomato begins to break down. Add enough hot water to cover the shanks and bring to a boil, cover with a lid, simmer and cook for about 1½ - 2 hours or until the lamb is tender.

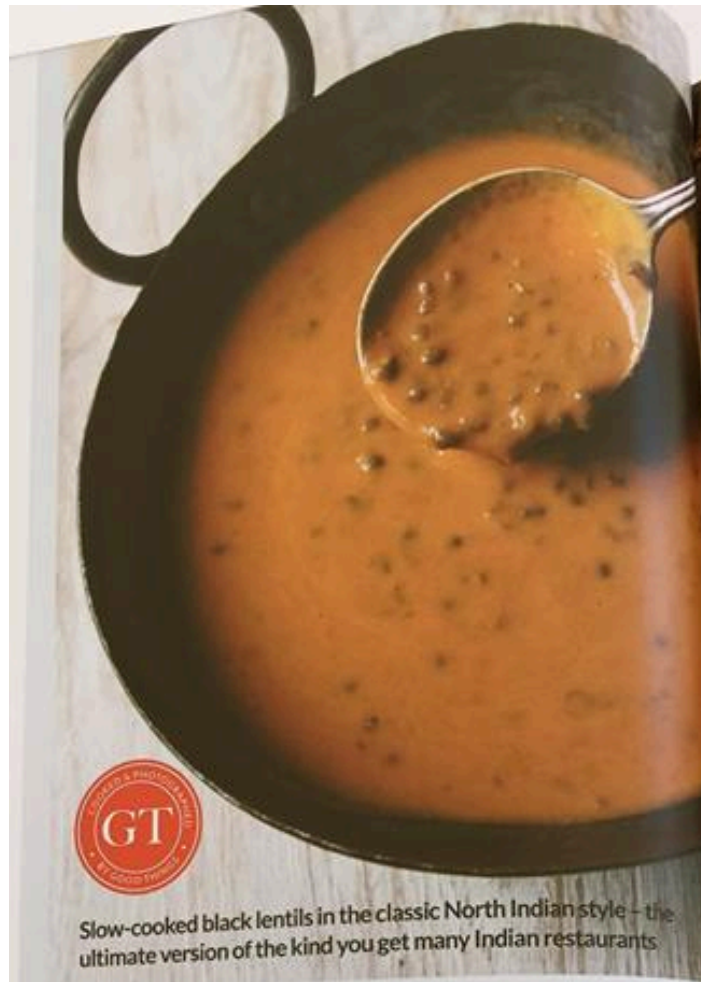
Using tongs, remove the shanks from the pan and place on a dish to cool. Strain the sauce into a clean saucepan, squeezing all the juices out of the residue. Cook the strained sauce over a medium heat, stirring occasionally, for a further 30 minutes, or until reduced to the desired consistency.

Check seasoning, pour into a container, and leave to cool. At this stage, if you wish to prepare this dish a day or two ahead, cover the cooked shanks and the sauce and refrigerate until required.

When ready to eat, remove and discard any solidified fat that has formed over the sauce, transfer it to a large saucepan, and bring to the boil.

Microwave the shanks for 4 - 6 minutes and add to the sauce. Cover the pan and simmer for a further 20 minutes.

Transfer the shanks and sauce to a serving platter, sprinkle with garam masala and chopped coriander, and serve hot, accompanied by steamed rice, pulao, or naan.



Slow-cooked black lentils in the classic North Indian style – the ultimate version of the kind you get many Indian restaurants

## ALFRED PRASAD'S DAL MAKHNI

SERVES: 4-6

### INGREDIENTS

- 125g urad dal (black lentils)
- 3l water
- 50g ginger-garlic paste (made by smoothly pureeing equal parts of each ingredient)
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- ½ tsp chilli powder
- 300g peeled plum tomatoes
- salt, to taste
- 20g unsalted butter
- 50ml single cream
- ½ tsp kasoori methi (dried fenugreek leaves), powdered
- 1 tsp salt
- Bunch spring onions, v. finely sliced

### METHOD

Preheat the oven to 120C.

Wash the urad dal, drain, and transfer to a large, thick-bottomed casserole pot. Add the water, the ginger-garlic paste, and the vegetable oil, then cover with a lid and slow-cook in the oven for 8 hours.

Meanwhile, add the chilli powder to the peeled plum tomatoes and blend into a purée. Strain and transfer to a saucepan. Cook over low heat until reduced to a third of the original volume and set aside.

Once the dal is cooked, skim off the black 'skin', and transfer to a clean large, thick-bottomed pot (avoid scraping any lentils that are stuck to the pan).

Add the cooked puréed tomatoes and salt and simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 30 minutes. Add the butter, stir well, then add the cream and simmer for a further 10 minutes.

Check seasoning then add the powdered kasoori methi and serve with pulao or naan bread.

Recipe courtesy of Alfred Prasad [alfredprasad.com](http://alfredprasad.com)