

Indian Flames: Fan the Fire

There are some interesting restaurants popping up in Alliston. Indian Flames is one of them. Chef and owner, Clyde Almeida, offers cooking lessons on the occasional Sunday (his day off) with proceeds going to charity.

Clyde is an inspiring person in many ways. It is not just the carrots and cumin he puts in a pan; he exudes warmth and wisdom and is a reminder of the importance of a loving family. His experiences in Pakistan, and building a life from nothing, have given him compassion for his neighbour. His life philosophy is that we are here to serve and be good people.

A group of 15 assembled around the open kitchen windows to watch the preparation of the dishes that we would later devour. The group was treated to a step-by-step demonstration of how to make a vegetable dish and Balti Gosht a chicken dish. Both recipes have over a dozen ingredients, most of them spices. Clyde explained the meanings behind the names Balti Gosht and the spice Garam Masala and told stories of his home country with a delightful sense of humour.

As each component was cooked it was passed around to the attendees. We smelled all the ingredients; spices, raw and cooked, and each stage as the recipe progressed.

When asked why he chose Alliston to set up his restaurant, Clyde said he likes small towns, he grew up in one, then with a grin he explained that his 'small town' had a population of a half a million, launching the group into more laughter.

The day of our cooking lesson, Clyde's wife Vanessa, who works in the city, and their two sons accompanied him. The comradery and love between them was as enjoyable to witness as the preparation of the food.

The family that benefits from the funds raised at Clyde's classes was found when a man came into the restaurant, and pondered the menu a long time. Clyde asked if he had questions about the food. The man told him he and his wife were out of work, and asked what he could get for \$10. Clyde told him not to worry, and brought out a plentiful meal.

Our class was the last to benefit that family; just in time to help with Christmas and as they start new jobs. Future cooking lessons will help someone else in need.

By Penelope Gilbertson