

Food & Wine

How to cook, dine out for less, and eat, drink and be merry

By MARY BROWNFIELD

IN AN area rich with culinary talents, exotic eating and high prices, a wonderfully affordable cooking adventure can be had with Sangita and Arijit Das, a Monterey couple who offer classes highlighting the sights, sounds and foods of their native India. Their latest four-session offering, which begins June 28, features vegan and vegetarian cooking — though they say meat can easily be added to the dishes to please the carnivores.

Hailing from Bengal, the Dases are an exuberant, charming and knowledgeable pair who discuss the culture, cuisine and cooking of India. Arijit usually spends the first third of each three-hour class presenting videos and telling stories, while Sangita prepares and serves an appetizer and drink. The rest of the evening revolves around ingredients and techniques as Sangita — always stunningly attired in an Indian

sari — walks students through the preparation of each recipe and answers questions. And, of course, everyone samples the results. The lessons are not highly technical and are very accessible.

Previous classes have focused on different regions, fish dishes, spices and curries, and other topics. Plans for the

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With the arrival of new Executive Chef Christophe Grosjean (recently of Marinus) and Executive Pastry Chef Ron Mendoza (recently of the French Laundry) and their total revision of the menus at L'Auberge Carmel, it became apparent that this simply isn't the same restaurant anymore. So we gave it a name of its own - Aubergine. New options, more choices but with the same care and attention to detail that made this the place *Bon Appetit* magazine named *Best of the Year* in its *Restaurant Hot Seat* review.

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vegan/vegetarian course include:

- June 28, Cardamom tea, Aloo Chat (with boiled potatoes, garbanzo beans and spices), Rajmah (red kidney beans cooked in a spicy curry sauce) and Chapatti (puffed bread);
- July 12, Sooji Halwa (semolina cooked in milk), Jaljeera (a refreshing summer drink) Chana Omelet (made with chickpea flour) and Raita (grated vegetables in yogurt);
- July 26, Bread Pakoda (fritters from spicy mashed potatoes), Sherbet (Indian-style lemonade), Pav Bhaji (spicy mixed vegetables served on a bun) and a lesson on making Garam Masala, a mixture of powdered spices; and
- Aug. 9, Dahi Vada (lentil cakes in yogurt), Masala Chai tea, Chitrannam (lemon rice) and Capsicum Bhajji (bell pepper fritters).

Each session will run 6 to 9 p.m. in the community room at La Mesa Village in Monterey, and the cost is \$85 for all

four, or \$25 per individual class. The fee includes instruction, food, handouts and a field trip.

For more information or to enroll, call (831) 375-5144 or email schawlia@yahoo.com.

■ Sunset suppers

Don't mind supping when the sun's still up? If not, early bird specials offer an inexpensive means of enjoying dinner out. Between 5 and 6:30 p.m. six nights a week (excluding Sundays), Bistro 211 in the Crossroads serves a \$16.95 fixed menu that includes Caesar or house salad, soup and the main course. This Friday, June 27, grilled fresh halibut served over braised spinach is on the menu, followed by Saturday's roast pork tenderloin with berries and bleu cheese. For information, call (831) 625-3030 or visit www.bistro211.com.

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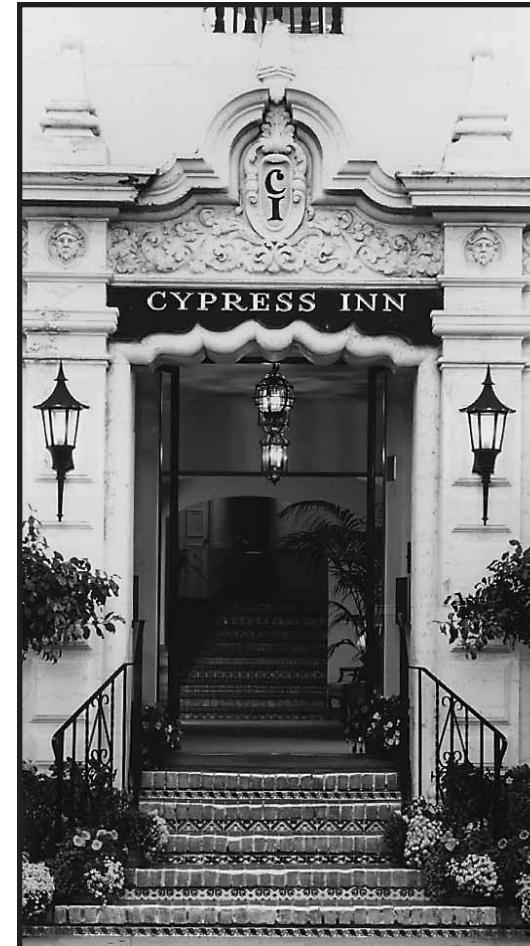
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