

[Chef's Vegetarian Dishes Relished by British Royalty](#)

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Imagine His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at Warwick Castle enjoying palak pakora chaat with lettuce and a chutney made from dates for starters, and then dhai (yoghurt) soup. These are followed by masala tomato chawal (spicy peas, tomatoes and rice) with baby corn, artichokes, avocados and pistachio sauce. To top it off, Indian sponge cake, yas malai and kulfi.

These are the creations of Satish Arora, voted last year by Member's, arguably the world's glossiest society magazine, as one of the "20 best chefs in the world."

Modern living gives less time for food preparation. It gives even less for experimenting and enjoying the vast variety of Indian cuisine or any other cuisine for that matter - especially vegetables and pulses. Pioneering healthy and mouth-watering vegetarian delicacies is something Satish Arora excels in. "My profession is a science and an art," enthuses this modest and unassuming son of an army officer. As Director of Food Production for the Taj Group of Hotels, he has a free hand to experiment and train his staff. He places more emphasis on practice than theory. "More and more people are being converted to vegetarianism. People still eat with their eyes, and that's half the battle," he says. To satisfy such changing habits, he puts more emphasis on smaller menus, and relies primarily on steaming, baking and poaching his vast range of vegetarian food. He modestly boasts of being able to prepare fifty different dishes each day in any food festival or party - and not a piece of meat, poultry or fish in sight. "Let me give you just a few sumptuous, healthy offerings. Take a couple of bunches of spinach leaf. Mix 100 grams of graham flour with a teaspoon of cumin seeds, chopped ginger and green chilies, mixed with pomegranate seeds. Add salt, red chili powder and freshly ground pepper to taste to a paste made out of four cloves of fresh garlic. Mix all the ingredients together with some water until the texture is light and semi-solid. Deep fry in corn oil for four minutes and take out of the pan. Once cool, these pieces should be pressed together and cut into smaller pieces, if desired, before frying again until they are crispy. The palak pakora (spinach fritter) should then be put on a plate of green, crispy lettuce.

To accompany such delights a sauce made from dates, jaggery and tamarind will top it all. Take 250 grams of dates, 250 grams each jaggery and tamarind and boil in a little amount of water. Once cool, add half a teaspoon each of black salt, red chili and freshly roasted cumin seed powder. The sauce should not too liquid. Palak pakora can be served either hot or cold."

Other examples of Satish Arora's healthy victuals include baked potatoes with five different lentils, saut[?]ed with tomatoes, onions, ginger and garlic. Or, you can experiment by making a lentil cake steamed and soaked in a sauce of your choice or topped with cream.

As with spinach pakora, fritters made from potatoes or arbi also make a mouthwatering snack. "Indian cooking is intuitive and cannot be standardized," says Satish Arora. Experience and experimentation has taught him that his profession is ever changing to meet the unique needs of people all over the world. He should know. He won the gold medal at the Escoffer Chef's Association on and has prepared exotic dishes for royalty, including Her Majesty The Queen, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Mikhail Gorbachev and thousands of other "lucky" customers.

Another tip from the master chef himself is that freshly ground spices and ingredients should be used, as they make the flavor sixty percent better. "You must work with your hands and make the ingredients talk to you. Then you, too, will be a chef," Satish insists.

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