

# STOP & SMELL the SPICES

**INDIAN FOOD**  
tempts the senses  
with exotic,  
mouth-watering  
ingredients

By **JUDITH W. WINNE**  
Courier-Post Staff

At Coriander Indian Bistro in Voorhees, inhale deeply.

Has anything ever smelled as heavenly as Indian food cooked with care and sophistication?

Ethnic food is redolent with mouth-watering aromas, and every culture boasts its favorite herbs and spices.

In Mexican food, we sniff out the cumin and cilantro. In Italian cooking, pungent garlic. As for Indian food, well, this is the behemoth of the spice rack. No one or two spices can define the cuisine. (See information box on Page 4 for details on an expanded biryani menu at Coriander this week.)

The vegetarian biryani by chef Vipul Bhasin (pronounced VIH-pull Ba-ZEEN) is an assault — in a very good way — on the senses.

"The vegetable biryani is very perfumey," says Bhasin.

The scent — Bhasin calls it a "sweetish aroma" — surpasses that of a designer cologne. And is it way more complex and addictive. Bhasin credits green and black cardamom, mace, dried rose petals and saffron as key elements in the blend of spices he grinds every few months.

See **INDIAN**, Page 4D

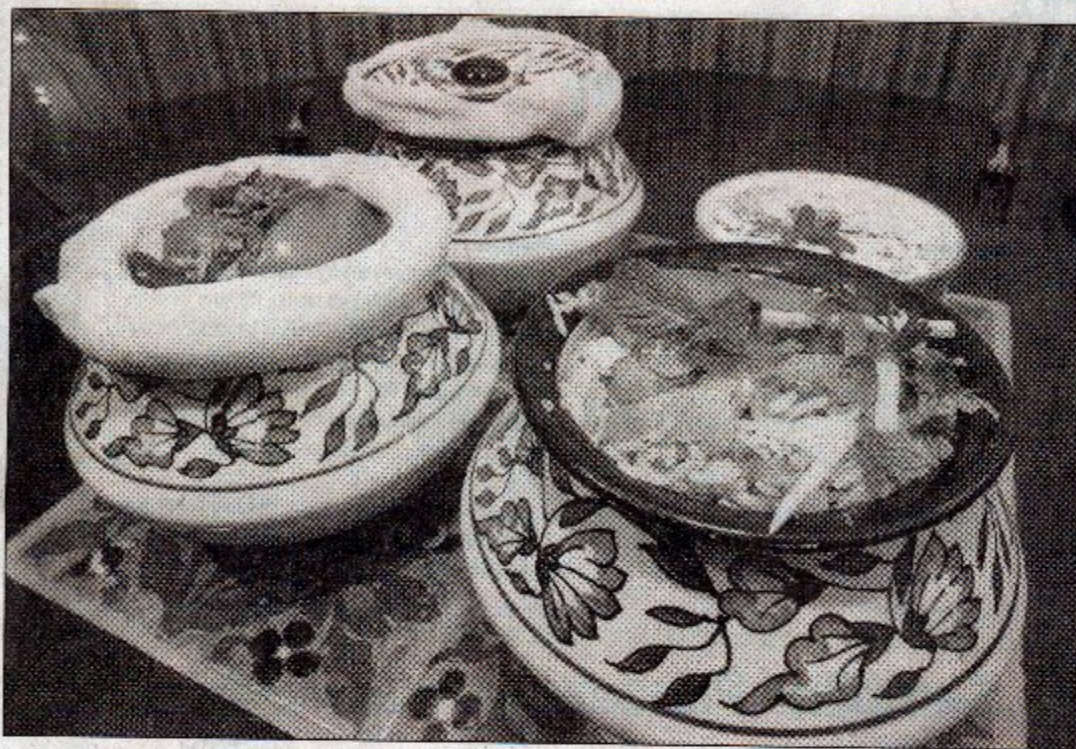
**courierpostonline**  
WEB EXTRA **.com**

■ To read about Home Cook columnist Maryanne Corsini's lesson in Indian cooking, and for her recipe for Dal for Beginners, visit the Web site and add [/living](#)

JOHN ZIOMEK/Courier-Post

Vegetable Biryani at Coriander is redolent with exotic aromas. The restaurant is featuring an expanded biryani menu this week.





The vegetable biryani has a strong, sweet scent at Coriander Indian Bistro in Voorhees. JOHN ZIOMEK/Courier-Post

## Indian/Biryani blends cardamom, saffron, rose petals in spice bouquet

Continued from Page 1D

"It's a combination," he says matter-of-factly of the spicy bouquet.

The biryani sits in a hand-painted, earthenware pot. Teapot-like covers and a ring of doughy naan, the melt-in-your-mouth Indian bread, help seal in the flavors. The pot, with its ingredients of match stick carrots, cauliflower, potatoes and other vegetables, is defined by the basmati rice — itself abundantly fragrant.

Each grain of rice, which is aged, like wine, separates perfectly from its neighbors.

"In Indian cuisine, if the rice is gooey, the chef is fired," laughs Bhasin.

His business partner, Amallesh Maitra, says there are many wonderful versions of vegetable biryani, including, of course, Bhasin's.

For Maitra, the dish's spices are like an alarm clock. They "bring to life all the sensations in your mouth."

Bhasin says legend has it that the *dum pukht biryani* (dum means steam) is rooted in northern India centuries ago. A ruler had his workers fed the

### FACTS ABOUT INDIA

India is a force to be reckoned with. The Web site [mapsindia.com](http://mapsindia.com) says the Indian population numbered more than 1 billion people in the 2001 census.

From [indianembassy.org](http://indianembassy.org), here are some facts about India:

- Major religions: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism
- Languages: 17 major languages, 844 dialects
- National bird: Peacock
- Form of government: Parliamentary, based on universal adult franchise
- National fruit: Mango
- National tree: Banyan
- National currency: Rupees

— Judith W. Winne

one-pot dish. It became so popular the royal family in the area now called Lucknow took to it, too.

"Now, it's the specialty of that region," says Bhasin.

**Clip the recipe for Vegetable Biryani from the Recipe File, page 3.**

Reach Judith W. Winne at (856) 486-2441 or [jwinne@courierpostonline.com](mailto:jwinne@courierpostonline.com)

### IF YOU GO

■ Coriander is hosting its special biryani menu through Saturday at 910 Haddonfield-Berlin Road, Voorhees, in the Ritz Theatre shopping center. In addition to the traditional vegetable, chicken and lamb biryani, the menu also will include goat, shrimp and three vegetarian versions of biryani. Call (856) 566-4546 or visit [www.coriana.com](http://www.coriana.com)

Some other area restaurants that regularly feature biryani on their menus include:

- Cinderella Sabbada Restaurant and Indian Cuisine, 4860 Route 42, Turnersville. (856) 227-6537. Chicken, lamb, shrimp and vegetable biryani.
- Gagan Bistro, 150 Route 73 N., Marlton. (856) 988-8751. Chicken, lamb, goat and vegetable biryani.
- Palace of Asia, 2389 Route 70 West, in the Howard Johnson motel, Cherry Hill (856) 773-1200. Chicken, shrimp, lamb, vegetable and special house biryani.
- Saffron Indian Cuisine, Route 130 and Market St., Gloucester City, (856) 742-0401. Chicken, vegetable, lamb and shrimp biryani.
- Tandoor Palace, 746 Route 70 West, Marlton. (856) 596-7100. Chicken, lamb, vegetable and goat biryani.