

With a brand new 12-part series called *Anjum's Spice Stories* on TLC, Anjum Anand, known for her popular show *Indian Food Made Easy*, is taking viewers through the culinary scene in Australia. She showcases a fresh and healthy take on Indian food as she travels through the beautiful cities, picking ingredients from local farmers markets and showing us how to create recipes from her favourite cookbooks. The British-Indian food writer and chef who has been all over the world, grew up in London, studied in Geneva and speaks many languages. The author of *Indian Every Day: Light Healthy Indian Food*, she talks to us about her new stint on television.

■ We've all been exposed to recipe channels that run through the day. How effective is this medium for people who are trying to change their eating habits?

I think for those who cook, it is a place to get inspired — by recipes, places and ingredients — and is a great catalyst for change. For those who aren't going to cook, it is a bit of light escapism. I do think that television is the best medium for change because it is so visual that it gives you the confidence to do the same thing. You can see the different stages and what the food looks like through the entire process. I have received lots of positive emails from people who say they tried to cook Indian food with my first series and have been cooking and loving it ever since. I have even been credited with helping people get married, settling into mixed marriages and pleasing their in-laws!

■ Tell us about your journey from getting your first book, *Indian Every Day* published to fronting your own series on BBC today.

Getting my first book published was a journey in itself. I decided that I wanted to write a book and the feedback was positive, but getting a publisher onboard with the idea wasn't so easy. It took me two years to get a publisher. Once that happened, it was another two years before I did the BBC2 series, *Indian Food Made Easy*. They were looking for an Indian cook; they knew they wanted a woman and they interviewed all those like myself who had a book out. We then shot a profile piece on me cooking and eating with some friends. That summer, a slot became available and the channel controller asked his people to pitch him ideas, but he clearly said, 'no food please!' The team played this for him anyway and apparently he thought it had legs, and so he started the process of commissioning the series. I had to pinch myself!

I suppose it was only after this that my career really took off. Having said that, this industry is extremely fickle and one can never be guaranteed another series or book deal — you are as good as your last dish (almost)! You have to work hard at it and try to be as relevant as possible. And nowadays, bloggers seem to be taking over in the industry.

■ You discovered your love for food when you were on a weight loss journey in your 20s. What would you like to tell young people who are looking to incorporate healthy eating into their lifestyle?

There is so much more information out there now. When I was trying to lose weight, everything was about fad diets. I think I even tried every one of them. Going fat-free was the next big thing after the fads. These days there are so many inspirational women and the general understanding of healthy eating is much more accessible. I also think Ayurveda has a lot of fantastic, common-sense advice on

▶ Anjum feels that today, healthy eating is more accessible and you need to stay committed to this choice



COOKING WITH ANJUM

A new television show on TLC takes us through Anjum Anand's travels as she showcases Indian cooking in Australia. Rhea Dhanbhoora & Pearl Mathias find out more



healthy eating. The biggest factor to lose weight though is sheer determination and commitment. The rest is details.

■ You've travelled extensively and taken Indian cuisine to places across the globe. Have the places you've visited influenced your cooking in any way?

Everything influences my cooking in some way. It may be just a dish or an ingredient, but I am easily inspired and very curious about cuisines from different countries.

■ What feedback have you received from people overseas when you introduced healthy Indian food to them while filming your series?

I think all the feedback has been positive. People see my passion for this cuisine and that I just want everyone else to love it as much as I do; and I believe it is the healthiest kind of food you can eat. People appreciate food that they might like to eat and learn to cook, so they actually do cook it and embark on a new kitchen journey, and hopefully they love it.

■ Do you have any other plans for the television space in the near future?

I would love to do an Indian version of the *Spice Stories*, where maybe the stories come from locals; the country has so much history, so many stories and interesting ingredients to showcase. I would love to do a show in an old Portuguese villa in Goa or a haveli in Rajasthan — something historic and beautiful.

■ Tell us about the one thing that happened while filming *Spice Stories* that will really stay with you.

The highlight for me was filming with my children. They bring a different energy and my smile is just bigger when they are around.