

COMMUNITY

Tastes of India nearby

An exciting new East Indian restaurant is now open for business in Nanaimo. Located right on the beach at Departure Bay, it overlooks Newcastle Island and the B.C. ferry docks. Day or night patrons enjoy a commanding view of the B.C. ferries entering the harbor. It's soon-to-be glassed in kidney shaped patio offers an even better view of the beach and harbor.

Chef-owner Shankar Datt has had plenty of experience cooking for crowds at many state functions.

Born in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India, Shankar, like the rest of India's top cooks, has never attended a culinary school, the art of Indian cooking being handed down from the older senior cooks to the younger ones.

At age 15 Shankar joined the domestic staff of Chakarvarty, the under secretary of external affairs, in New Delhi. His first job was washing the hundreds of dishes used at official gov't functions. There were five others on their staff. Later, on special occasions he was allowed to go to Government House, the official home of the president of India, as bus-boy then waiter and so up the ladder until he was appointed 2nd cook which lasted from 1948-51.



Indo Canadian

By Joan Mayo

In 1951 Chakarvarty was assigned to London for one year as Indian High Commissioner again taking Holland as his personal butler and cook. While Shankar cooked the Indian meals a local chef provided the western food enabling Shankar to learn another style of cooking.

In 1953 Chakarvarty was posted London for one year as Indian High Commissioner again taking Shankar with him, then back to India where Shankar enjoyed the position of supervising the entire staff.

The now inseparable pair spent three years in Sri Lanka before Chakarvarty became High Commissioner to Canada arriving in Ottawa in 1960.

A subsequent posting as the Indian representative to the United Nations took Chakarvarty and Shankar to New York for five years. Here Shankar had the pleasure of cooking for David and Nelson Rockefeller, U Thant Sec. Gen of the U.N., John F. Kennedy and the Queen Mother.

It was here he met and married his Finnish wife Maria, a member of his staff.

Opting to remain in Canada when Chakarvarty returned to India, Shankar and Maria made their way to Nanaimo. He worked from 1966 - 79 in a saw mill then opened his first restaurant in Departure Bay called Datt Place. When a prospective buyer offered to buy the restaurant, Shankar tried for three years to retire, but missing the work he loved best, opened the Kashmir House on Nov. 1, 1987.

Tastefully decorated, his restaurant serves the type of food offered in any of India's top four star hotels. He's still hoping for an opportunity to show the variety of foods he knows he can do.